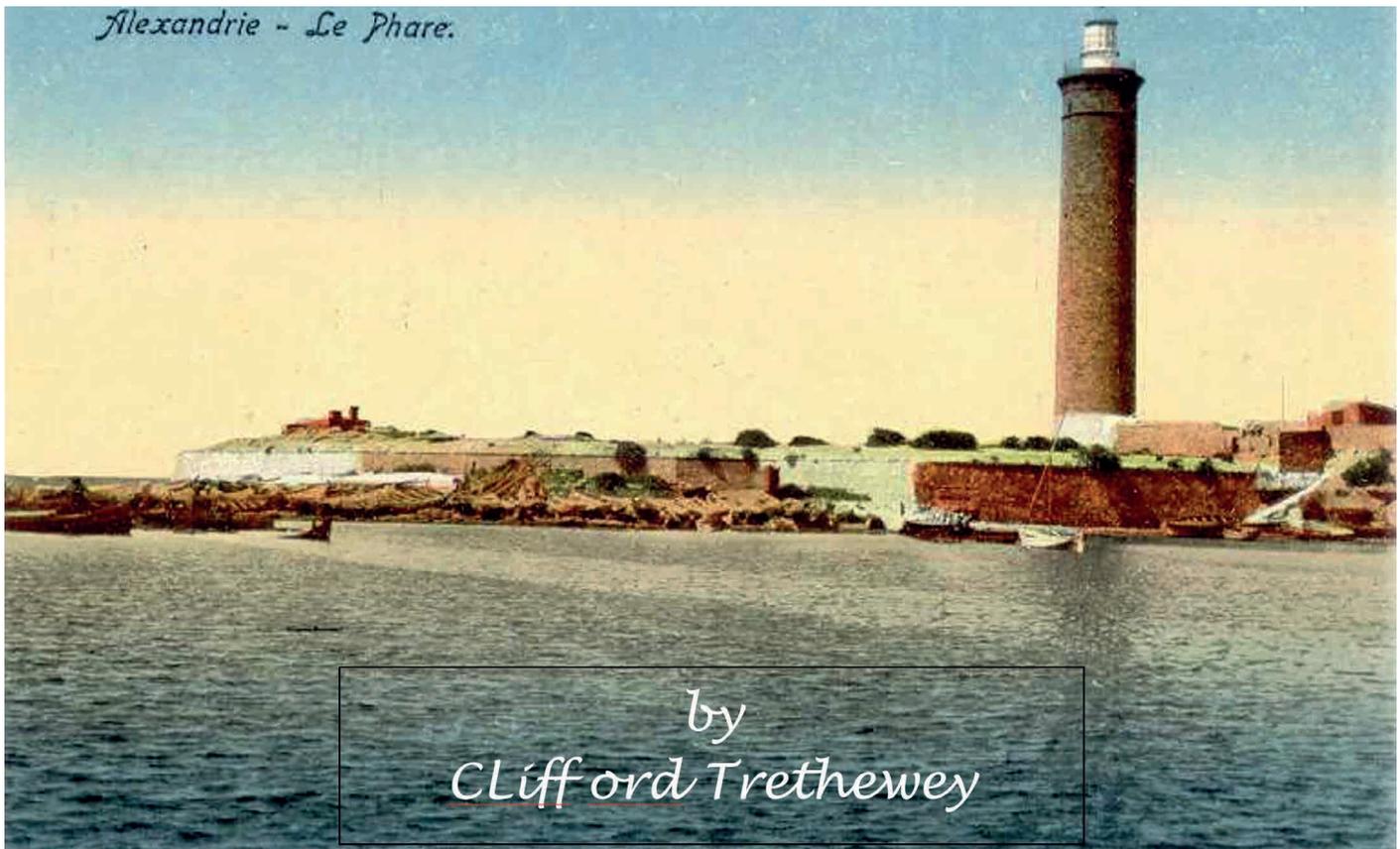


A Breed Apart: The Light Keepers of Egypt

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The excited anticipation of viewing a new census has long been dissipated by the increased access to historical resources on-line. However, I must admit to a slight tingle of excitement as I began to figure out the best way to search for light keepers in my home county of Devon in the 1921 Census. The original sheets were not a lot different from 1911 except that there was no address on the sheet. It was hidden on the reverse, making it a laborious second transaction. Nevertheless, it was pleasing to notice that not only was the employer recorded (as 1911), but the place of employment had been added. For a light keeper 'Off Duty' this was a brilliant addition, as it became clear which lighthouse served as his appointment. The transcription was an entirely new format with many extra features, codes and interpretations, not all of which were instantly understandable and I was gradually to realise that the transcription itself, was so bad that it inhibited the quality of the search and its results.

This was to be the last census that could be added to our Database of Light Keepers. The 1931 census had been incinerated for lack of space, so this was an important exercise as I was gathering ALL light keepers and not just those who worked for Trinity House. Imagine my surprise when trawling through the modest list of names I had assembled from Devon, when I encountered not one, but two keepers who worked for the Egyptian Government. This set my heart racing as I was looking at a situation that was previously unknown to us and could not be ignored.

At the end of my nationwide search, I had SEVEN working keepers and one retired. Inevitably 6 of the 7 were in the south, with 2 in Devon, 2 in Hampshire, 1 in London and 1 in Suffolk. The odd man out was in York, whilst Hoole in Cheshire was the place where the

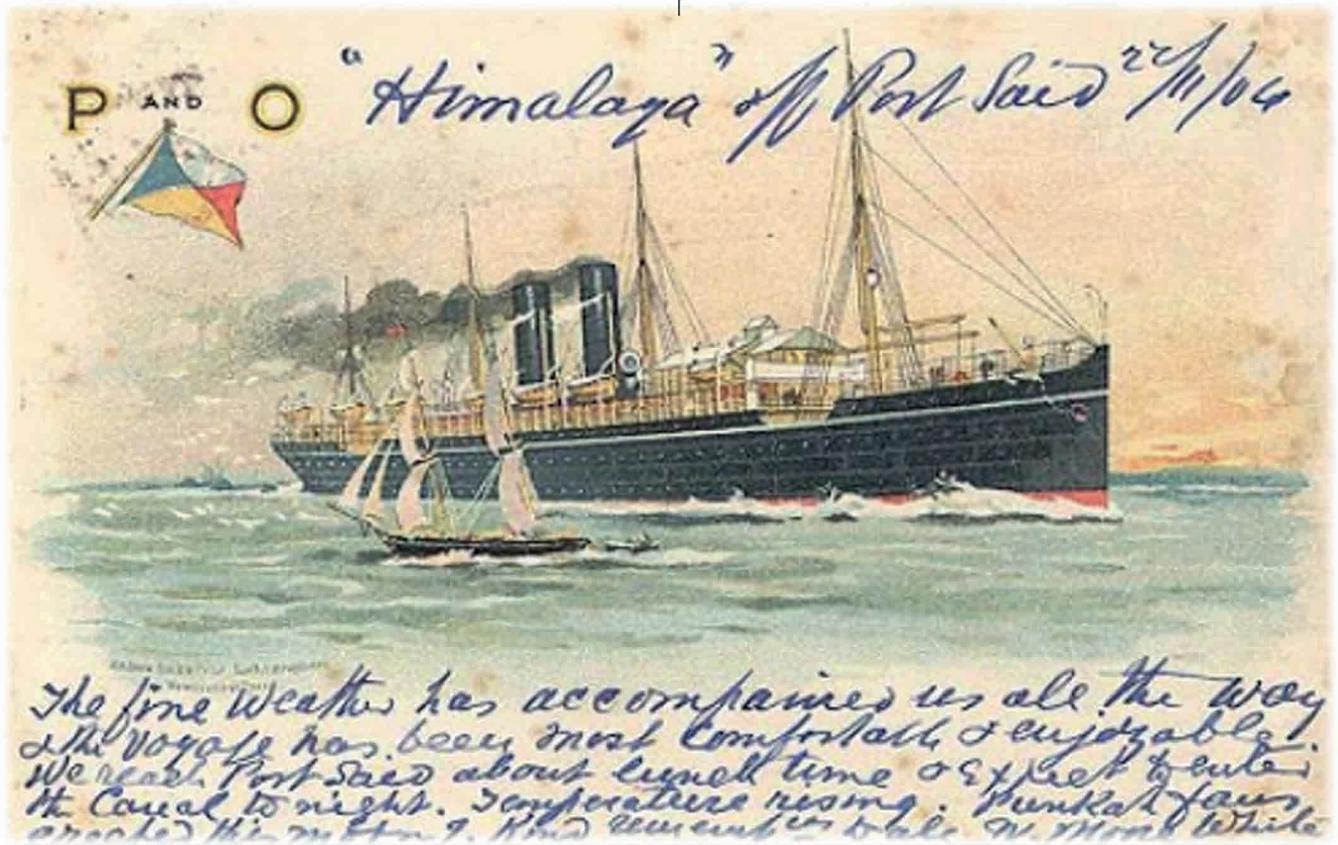
older keeper (57) was settled into his retirement. All the keepers were aged between 35 and 47, with 5 of them in their 40s and as it was such a small number it was essential to try to understand how this working relationship came about and who the men were who looked for something a little different in their working life, but how was I to unravel this long forgotten story? These were the Light Keepers I found:

Surname	Forename		DOB	POB	Status	Location
BERRY	William Henry	47	1874	Farringdon, Devon	MAR	Babbacombe, Devon
CUTTING	James	44	1877	Portsmouth, Hants	UNM	Southsea, Hampshire
FEIST	Horace Edward	39	1882	London	UNM	Paignton, Devon
LUCAS	Frederick	40	1881	Portsmouth, Hants	MAR	Swaythling, Hampshire
MILLS	Walteer Marshall	57	1864	Portsmouth, Hants	MAR	Hoole, Cheshire
RISEBOROUGH	James	43	1878	Sunderland, Durham	MAR	York, Yorkshire
THOMAS	John	35	1886	Southampton, Hants	UNM	Lowestoft, Suffolk
WOODHAM	Charles Arthur	42	1879	London	MAR	Wandsworth, London

This initial discovery was like opening Pandora's Box as the next, obvious step was to look at the passenger lists of people departing from the UK to travel the world. These were the days when people travelled on a liner, not for pleasure, but for work. Of course they enjoyed 'the cruise,' but it was a means to an end. Their job was waiting for them on the other side of the world. The numbers of passengers on each vessel was not large, varying from 40 to 200, but it was astonishing to see how many names were listed under variations of the words 'Lighthouse Keeper,' destined for exotic locations. However, like all research, it was not tidy. Only 4 of the 8 men found in the 1921 census - Cutting, Lucas, Mills and Riseborough, appeared in the passenger lists. Why? Probably because those paper lists have not survived to tell the tale, but the ones that have are listed here on the following page.

Twenty names were found embarked for the 20 day 'cruise' to Port Said spanning the 20-year period from 1915 to 1935, with two exceptions at either end (1908 and 1936). One of them was not a light keeper, but a Lighthouse Inspector (Reade), whilst another Keeper made one tour as a Lighthouse Engineer (Hawker 1934).

1915 meant travelling in convoy with a destroyer escort and running the gauntlet of the Austrian and German submarines in the Mediterranean. It was a risk, but one they were prepared to take. In happier times, it was a pleasurable journey that few in England knew anything about, as gloom and depression enveloped the country and the lives of its inhabitants. The table lists eighteen light keepers for the record and this paper will explore their identities whenever possible and unravel the conditions of this unusual situation in which 23 different liners provided their passage to Egypt.



Surnames (SIC)	Forenames		DOB	Name of Ship	Line	Sailing Date	Departure
ANSTISS	Percy Douglas	55	1880	Barrabool	P&O	17-Jan-1935	London
BURKITT	Frederick J	39	1890	Jervis Bay	Aberdn & Com	01-May-1929	Southampton
BURKITT	Frederick John	44	1888	Barrabool	P&O	02-Jan-1932	Plymouth
BIRKETT	Frederick John	46	1888	Baradine	P&O	10-Mar-1934	Plymouth
CUTTING	James	42	1877	Kildonan Castle	P&O	19-Mar-1919	London
ELLIS	Arnold John	38	1894	Balranald	P&O	30-Jan-1932	Liverpool
FISHER	Francis	37	1878	Orontes	Orient	05-Jun-1915	London
GANT	W. J.	39	1876	Mongolia	P&O Stm Nav	17-Sep-1915	London
HARDY				Yorck	NDeutchLloyd	06-Mar-1908	Southampton
HARVEY	J. H.	41	1878	Priam	Blue Funnel	20-Oct-1919	Liverpool
HAWKER	George	45	1884	Jervis Bay	Aberdn & Com	01-May-1929	Southampton
HAWKER	George	46	1884	Insulinde	RotterdamRM	14-Jul-1930	Southampton
HAWKER	George	48	1883	Moreton Bay	Aberdn & Com	30-Sep-1931	Southampton
HAWKER	George	49	1884	Dempro	RotterdamRM	03-Feb-1933	Southampton
HAWKER	George	50	1884	Marnix van St. Aldegonde	NedRDM	04-May-1934	Southampton
HAWKER	George	51	1884	Bendigo	P&O	06-Jun-1935	London
HYNDE	William	39	1893	Balranald	P&O	30-Jan-1932	Liverpool
JONES	G. R.	42	1877	Manora	B.I.S.N. Co.	20-Jun-1919	London
LUCAS	Frederick	41	1880	Dongola	P&O Stm Nav	29-Jul-1921	London
McINTYRE	J. A.	32	1883	City of London	City	06-Oct-1915	Liverpool
MILLS	W	40	1880	City of Baroda	City	21-May-1920	Liverpool
NASH	Albert	31	1891	Morea	P&O Stm Nav	31-Mar-1922	London
READE	E. W. H	64	1871	Otranto	Orient	31-Aug-1935	London
RISEBOROUGH	James	42	1878	City of Baroda	City	21-May-1920	Liverpool
RISEBOROUGH	J	43	1878	Yorkshire	Bibby Line	5-Aug-1921	Liverpool
SEYMOUR	Henry	40	1875	Persia	P&O Stm Nav	12-Jun-1915	London
SOMMERVILLE	John William	53	1877	Oronsay	Orient	23-May-1930	London
SOMERVILLE	John William	56	1879	Baradine	P&O	11-Apr-1935	London
SOMERVILLE	John	57	1879	Naldera	P&O Stm Nav	5-Jun-1936	London

The Politics of Empires

At first sight I thought it unrealistic that anything could be learnt from a simple Passenger List. Any Social Scientist will tell you, that if enough data is available, anything is possible, but this was not England and the Trinity House Service, this was Egypt.

In the year of Nelson's great victory over the French at Trafalgar, 1805, Egypt broke away from the Ottoman Empire and became a self-governing vassal state led by Muhammad Ali Pasha. It had its own hereditary monarchy, military, currency and legal system and even its own empire in Sudan. However, Britain, as always, was heavily involved and the Suez Canal was at the heart of it.

In 1882, following the damaging bombardment of Alexandria by the Royal Navy, Britain occupied Egypt with 40,000 British troops. The reason for this 'illegal' occupation is still argued by historians to this day, but it remained in place until 1914. In that year, whilst the public at home was distracted by Germany and the First World War, the British re-established the Sultanate of Egypt, whilst not going as far as to declare their legal independence. This became a war of words as it was said that the British had not annexed Egypt, but had declared it a 'protectorate.' Egypt had not become a part of the British Empire, but was wholly administered by the United Kingdom. This formalised the political and military role that the British Government had exercised since 1882, but the Egyptians were not happy.

By 1919, there was a very strong movement towards independence which the British were resisting, as they would continue to do throughout many countries in the Empire for the next 60 years. The British began negotiations to placate Egyptian grievances whilst giving away as little as possible. Inevitably these negotiations failed and almost from a state of exasperation they terminated the 'Protectorate' and recognised Egypt as an independent state. However, the United Kingdom was not letting go. It granted itself 'reserved powers' in four areas - foreign affairs, communications (possibly a euphemism for the Suez Canal), military and Sudan - and it was loosely known as the Anglo-Egyptian Accord 1922 - but the Egyptian Government had never actually agreed to it.

It seems to me that the timeline hidden within this political scenario, is reflected in the dates of passage of light keepers to Egypt, who ostensibly worked for the Egyptian Government, but was that really true? I cannot ignore the possibility inferred in much of the text that the British actually controlled every part of Egypt's infrastructure and the harbours and lights would have been an important part of that infrastructure as much of it had been built by them. Senior naval commanders are often found in the role of Harbour Masters and I have seen nothing to suggest that this was not the case in Alexandria. It also adds weight to the recruitment of former naval ratings as light keepers. The naval officers would know exactly what they were getting and where their loyalties would lie.

As this narrative proceeds it will reveal new evidence for the structure of the Lights Administration and a clear knowledge of the lights themselves is desperately needed. Inevitably the story will be a little confusing but I will endeavour to lead my reader to a conclusion and it will be brought alive by the lives of the people involved at every level. However, the light keepers needed lighthouses and these had to be administered by an organisation, so before I tackle the lighthouses it is necessary to put the administration in place.

The Ports & Lights Administration Comes Alive

It has become clear to me that the political landscape of the area in the period up to 1914 was extremely sensitive, and what appears to be an amicable collaboration between the Egyptians and the British was entirely dependent upon the acquiescence of the Turks. The Sultan of Turkey appointed the Khedive of Egypt as his Viceroy, but he was then expected to dance to the British tune. The old Ottoman enmities never really disappeared and this led to the Royal Naval bombardment of Alexandria in 1882. It was an attempt at reducing Turkish influence, but the years leading to WW1 saw increasing Turkish interference and obstruction.

Along the way I had gained the impression that British influence dominated the Egyptian Ports & Lights Administration with a naval presence due to its recruitment pattern and in that Victorian period this conclusion was not far wide of the mark. This came to light following a simple death announcement in the *York Herald* for the 4 December 1890. It read;

HARDCASTLE - On the 1st inst. At Alexandria, Egypt, William John Hardcastle Bey, Deputy Controller General of Egyptian Ports and Lighthouses.

This discovery was illuminating, for it led to uncovering the identity of William Hardcastle and how he had come to such an exalted position. The use of the word ‘Bey’ was a Turkish honorary rank, that meant that Hardcastle had to be addressed as His Excellency, in spite of coming from a well established Newcastle family of medical practitioners. He had been born in Newcastle in 1831 to William and Ann, and baptised in the parish of St. John from Westgate Street on the 27 April 1831. He was educated in Newcastle and on leaving school he became a railway engineering pupil of the great Robert Stephenson, also a Newcastle man. When William was 18 he watched his mentor insert the last rivet into Newcastle’s high level bridge that was then opened by Queen Victoria. Stephenson recognised Hardcastle’s talent and referred to him as ‘my finest pupil’ and such was his confidence that when Stephenson was asked to mastermind the layout and construction of Egypt’s first railway, he entrusted the task to Hardcastle in 1851 when he was only 21.

The railway eventually linked Alexandria with Cairo by 1854 and reached Suez by 1858 with a couple of branches to other significant centres of population. During that time William Hardcastle married Jane Rebecca McCauley on the 9 March 1857¹. She was the daughter of the former American Consul and they married in Her Britannic Majesty’s Consulate in Alexandria. After spending some time as the superintending engineer to the railways he was invited to be the engineer in charge of the Port of Alexandria and this later included responsibility for Egypt’s embryonic lighthouses. This opportunity arose because its previous incumbent, Rear-Admiral Henry F. McKillop Pasha² RN had died on the 5 June 1879 and Hardcastle became Egypt’s new Deputy Controller General for its ports and lights. In recognition of his work as Egypt’s foremost engineer, he was raised to rank of ‘BEY’ and awarded the Order of Osmanieh which was established in 1862 and was the personal gift of the Sultan of Turkey to Ottoman civil servants and military leaders for outstanding services to the state.

William Hardcastle had only had the ‘top job’ for three years when he had the mortification of seeing his pet lighthouse - the Pharos (Ras el Tin, Ed.)³ - disabled by a shell from HMS *Superb* during the bombardment of Alexandria by the British Royal Navy on

¹ *Newcastle Journal* 4 April 1857.

² Pasha was used in the Ottoman Turkish empire as an equating to a General - In England it might be Lord or Sir.

³ *Newcastle Chronicle* 3 December 1890.

the 11 July 1882. Before the year was out he had a new lighthouse on his mind. On the 26 December 1882, *Reuters* sent a telegram from Alexandria to London noting that;

*Hardcastle Bey, Comptroller of the Lighthouse Administration, will leave Suez with a number of employees, probably on Thursday [28 Dec], for the purpose of immediately commencing works for the erection of a lighthouse on the Brothers Rock.*⁴

This provides an unequivocal date for the construction that had previously been lacking and clarifies who it was that actually built it, which has also been noted incorrectly. So having accidentally stumbled upon the leadership of the Lighthouse Administration, the question that remains open is - who was the man named McKillop who preceded Hardcastle?

Henry Frederick McKillop was born in Dunkirk, France in 1822, but he did not become a Midshipman until he was 24 (instead of 14) but it only took him a year to pass the coveted Lieutenant's examination. On the 20 April 1849, whilst a Lieutenant, he was the groom at a grand wedding in Tamerton Foliot church near Devonport. His bride was Marie Mary MURRAY who was just 19 years old. Her elder sister Ellen, was married to John Radcliffe, from the family who owned Warleigh House, but her father was Lieutenant General John Murray of Clifton, Bristol, who had been the Governor of Demerara in the Guianas from 1813 to 1824 and was himself a plantation owner at neighbouring Berbice, which amalgamated with Demerara to form British Guiana.

Much of McKillop's time in service was in command of one or other of the smaller vessels, so he was a seaman to the core and no engineer. He arrived in Egypt in April 1868 in the rank of Captain to take command of Egypt's Naval College and its training ships and two years later he retired from the Navy, but continued in service in a retired capacity. This date coincides with Yasser Aref's paper (see below) in which he states the date of the formation of the Ports & Lights Administration to be 1868 and McKillop had been appointed as its first leader. Decisions about lighthouses were made by a committee who sought the advice of 'engineers' and it is almost certain that one of them was Hardcastle, who must have been the most experienced engineer in Egypt. It was, therefore, no surprise to read that Hardcastle had inherited McKillop's position when he died.

Following Hardcastle's death, information concerning his successors disappear until 1932, which falls neatly into the period embraced by this paper. Rear Admiral Wells Pasha was the Director General of Egyptian Ports & Lights when he appealed to the British public for Christmas gifts for the 35 lighthouse keepers in the Red Sea. He admitted that:

*... many of the men were not Englishmen, but they are forced to lead an existence in what is probably the most lonely and isolated spots in the world.*⁵

With the bonus of including the number of Light keepers in the Red Sea, it is difficult to reconcile the earlier knowledge that six lights each had four keepers, so at least two more lights that needed attendance must have come into operation in the preceding 50 years.

It would appear that Wells had only just arrived in August 1932 as he replaced Vice-Admiral Tomlin and Wells seems to have been still in office in March 1935. The absence of initials, however, makes Wells difficult to identify. He may have been Gerard Wells, whose 'voluntary retirement' was announced by the Admiralty in 1930. His retirement may have been a precursor to relieving George Napier Tomlin, who had been loaned to the Egyptian

⁴ *Morning Post* 27 December 1882

⁵ *Journal of Commerce & Shipping*, 9 November 1932

Navy as Rear-Admiral Tomlin in 1927. One modern source⁶ says that he held the job in Alexandria until 1934, but contemporary newspaper reports say otherwise. This confirmation that it was a naval-dominated position has vindicated my earlier assumption to my great satisfaction.

It would be reasonable to assume that British involvement in the Administration came to an end in or around 1937, but as yet no information has come to light, so it is time to turn to the lights themselves and the dates of their construction.

Alexandria - A Brief History of Lighthouse Construction

Today the majority of Egyptian lights are modern, post-WW2 lights. Those that are older are not well documented and often have unknown building dates, so how was I to approach the subject of the lighthouses themselves? Research was my salvation and it began in the form of a paper⁷ by Yasser Aref, Head of Architecture at the Alexandria and Mediterranean Research Centre. His introduction reads as follows;

During the 1800s, lighthouses were part of the general public works plan carried out by Mohamed Ali the Viceroy of Egypt, in his goal to modernize Egypt, and to make it a competitor to European countries. To achieve this goal, railways, canals, bridges, telegraph posts, arsenals, docks, irrigation canals and harbors were constructed all over Egypt. Several lighthouses were constructed along the coast of Alexandria and eastwards in Rosetta, Damietta, Cape Bourlos and Port Said to facilitate the navigation of trade and navy vessels to and from Egyptian ports.

Mohamed Mazhar Pasha studied engineering and mathematics for 10 years in France during the 1830s. He was the chief engineer during the reign of Mohamed Ali. Among his engineering and military tasks, he was responsible for the construction of the first modern lighthouse in Alexandria at the tip of Ras El Tin Peninsula. This lighthouse was constructed while Mohamed Ali concentrated on the renovation of the Alexandria seaport and his wish to establish a powerful, well-equipped navy.

Later many lighthouses were constructed due to the energy and intelligence of Mickillop Pasha. Mickillop Pasha was a British Royal Navy soldier and the Headmaster of the Egyptian Navy School. He was appointed as the first chief of the Lighthouses Department which was established in 1868.⁸ The location of each lighthouse was carefully chosen by a specialized committee that comprised of experienced Egyptian sailors and professional maritime engineers under the supervision of experienced foreign experts. At the death of Said Pasha, in 1863, the lighthouse which is located in Ras El Tin was the only structure of its kind in any Egyptian port along the Mediterranean (this contradicts his first paragraph). Ismail Pasha (ruled 1863 - 1879) was responsible for the construction of several lighthouses in Alexandria such as the ones in Agami (1873), the lighthouse at the end of the breakwater erected in the Alexandria port (1876), and Qabbari lighthouse (1877).

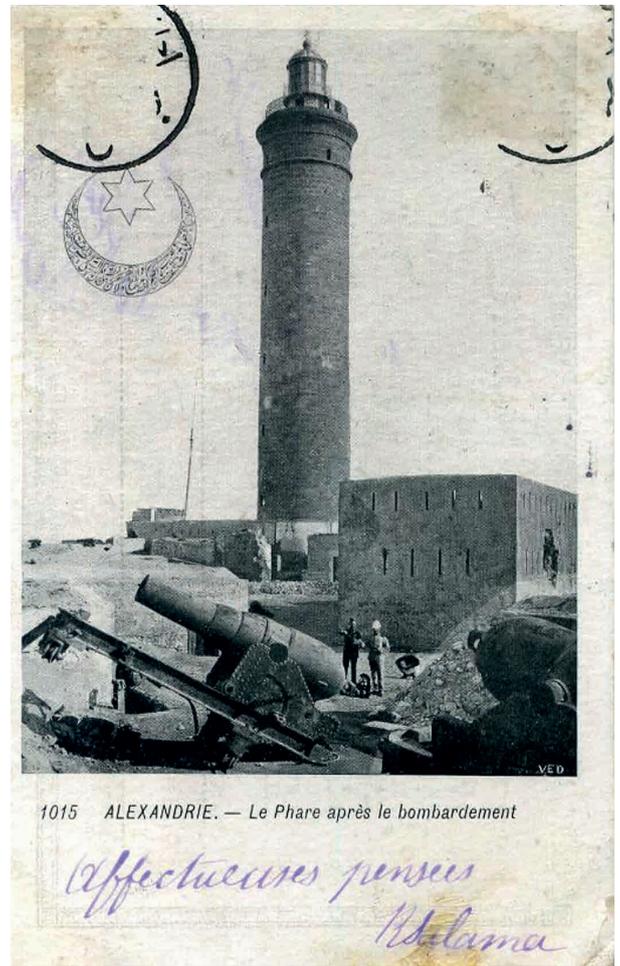
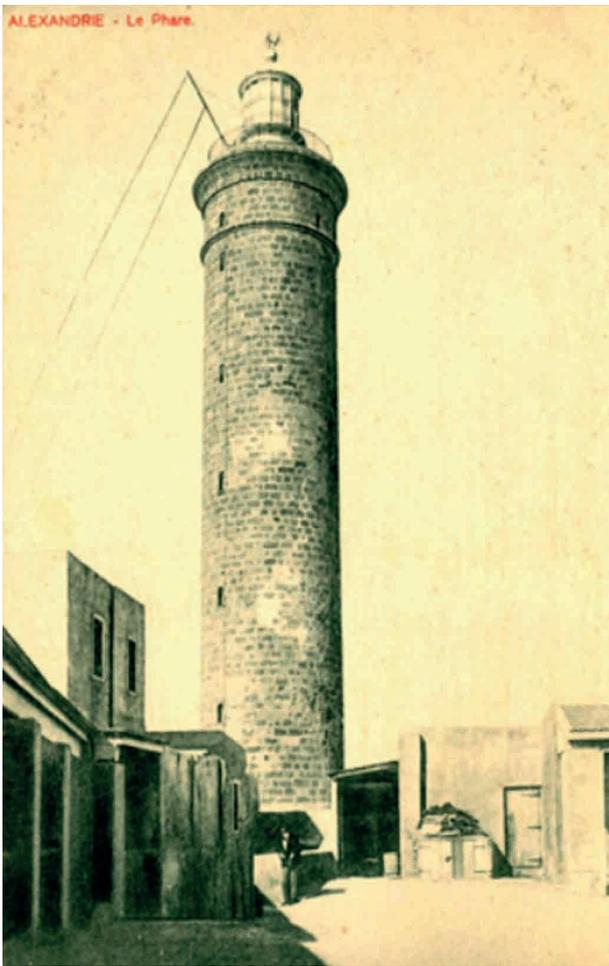
Alexandria is the obvious place to start this narrative as it was Egypt's largest port, but its historic significance cannot be ignored as the place where it all began with the Pharos.⁹ Indeed, Alexandria's oldest 'modern' light, Ras el Tin, was (and still is) located not far from the position of the original Pharos. This location is now Fort Qaitbay, built in the 1480s and

⁶ Wikipedia

⁷ Dated April 2010 and published in November 2009 at an International Seminar in Algiers

⁸ See later heading for a fuller more accurate explanation)

⁹ For a detailed history of the Pharos of Alexandria, see Ken Trethewey, Ancient Lighthouses (2018) Jazz-Fusion Books; <https://pharology.eu>



ABOVE LEFT: The Ras el Tin lighthouse in an old postcard dated c1882

ABOVE RIGHT: The same lighthouse after the bombardment in 1882

Alexandria's most visited tourist attraction, if for no other reason than to marvel at the stones taken from the original Pharos to build it.

My reader might have noticed that the text does not name a date for the Ras el Tin. It only says that it was there before 1863. Modern enthusiasts suggest it could be as early as 1848¹⁰ and with only one lighthouse they would not need a lighthouse department which came along 20 years later. Ras el Tin is an impressive brick structure, 180 feet to the top of its cupola. Its light characteristic, flashing 3-times in 30 seconds with two flashes together and a range of 21 miles, must be 20th century. What is unknown is its original light source. Was it oil or gas and was it electrified during the period of this paper?

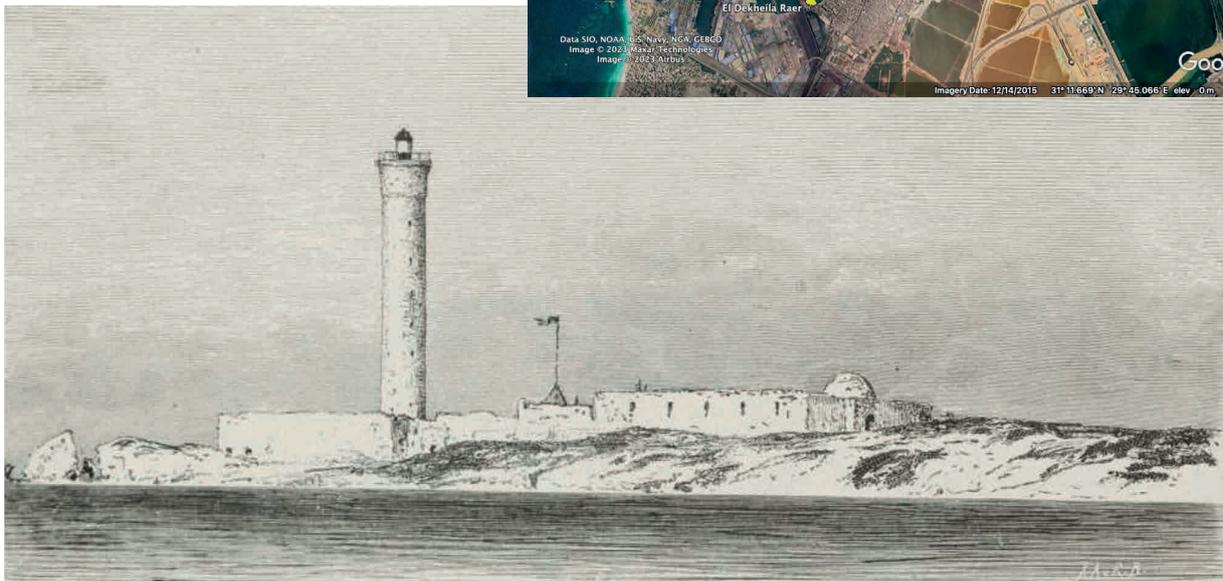
I would also suggest that this was the only light tower that might have been a destination for our light keepers, but there was only a spiral staircase within the tower and all the others are essentially harbour lights or leading lights.

The postcard reproduced here dates from 1878, but the next image is from 1882 and shows the damage caused close to the lighthouse by the Royal Navy's bombardment. From the sea, the view of the lighthouse is much different, as it sits on a narrow spit of land and this is followed by a post card from the 1930s when it seems to have acquired black & white stripes. This must mean that the brickwork has been rendered smooth and it doesn't look like the same lighthouse. The additional map is intended to add a little clarity to its position within the harbour of Alexandria.

¹⁰ *Lighthouse Digest Magazine* - published in the US, one of a number of sources that might be quoting each other.



The Ras El Tin lighthouse was the first lighthouse to be built in Alexandria after the loss of the Great Pharos.



It was not until I came to write this paragraph that the problem really hit me. Port Said was the place where everyone coming to Egypt disembarked, but what if they were travelling to Cairo or Palestine, Alexandria or the Red Sea? Alexandria is 150 miles to the west of Port Said, but what were the roads and railways like in the 1920s and 30s? Did keepers have to report their presence to the offices in Alexandria? Probably. And if they had been allocated to Port Said or even the Red Sea, what then?

Unlike Alexandria, millions of people have passed through Port Said and it is a place where visitors took to the deck to watch the disorganised mayhem that surrounded every liner that arrived. Bum boats full of fruit and souvenirs crowded around shouting for attention and hoping for a sale. Passengers lined the rails in amusement, and in the middle of it all was the canal's very own lighthouse that began its work when the canal opened in November 1869, but my feeling is that this lighthouse was different.



Port Said to Suez

When the French architect and engineer François Coignet was asked to design the lighthouse for Port Said, he realised that the locality was devoid of any suitable stone quarries. His mind turned to concrete, but the contemporary wisdom thought that it was not strong enough for a structure akin to a lighthouse. Instead, he devised a way of cleverly combining steel rods and earthenware tiles to produce the first ever reinforced concrete. This new technique revolutionised the building industries of the world and the lighthouse was praised for its unique style as Port Said became a leader in modernity. The lighthouse showed its light for the first time on the day of opening of the canal, and this octagonal tower with its vertical black stripes still stands today at 59 m (194 feet) high. Consequently, both words in my heading will be largely conjecture based upon the evidence supported by a little basic research and a large helping of common sense. But there is no better.

The Suez Canal was designed by Ferdinand deLessops and built by French contractors. It took ten years instead of six and cost double its estimate. On completion its ownership was vested in the Suez Canal Company as a joint French and British venture with its shares divided 56:44 in favour of the French, but it was the HM Government that owned the British shares and the Port Said lighthouse was an integral part of the canal. In fact it was not the only lighthouse along the canal as the post card below shows. This one stood in the North Bitter Lake and the photograph has received much publicity.

There should have been another light at the southern entrance/exit to the canal at Suez, but modern attempts at recording Egypt's lighthouses are devoid of any dates, either of establishment or build and consequently a coherent, credible narrative is difficult to construct. However, it does appear that the southern end of the canal was guarded by latticework structures which were entirely functional AND cheap. However that wasn't the way that the lighthouse at Port Said was viewed, when it was thought to be 'one of the world's greatest feats of modern engineering.'



ABOVE: The Port Said lighthouse at the Mediterranean entrance to the Suez Canal.



ABOVE: The lighthouse at North Bitter Lakes, one of two French lights built as part of the Suez Canal.

The Lighthouses of the Red Sea

A passage through the canal for the officers of a ship is a stressful business. For everyone else, it is completely boring. Nothing to see but sand, the ship ahead and the ship behind. Yes, the transits are made in convoy. One southbound (some say two) and one northbound, and both begin at about 4 a.m. in morning. To join it, a ship has to book its place and cross a certain line of latitude before 1 a.m. My father (Nelson Trethewey) made that journey in 1951 and 1954 (outward and homeward), but my grandfather (Fred Knott) did it in 1905 and 1906 (outward and homeward), whilst great-grandfather (Henry Westaway Trethewey) did it in 1871 and 1874 (outward and homeward). Only my father made the transit in P&O liners (Canton & Chusan), whilst my grandparents' passages were courtesy of the Royal Navy. The distance is 120 miles (193 km) from Port Said to Suez and it has to be made very slowly so that the banks of the canal are not damaged by the wash of the ship. Consequently it can take nearly 16 hours at a maximum permitted speed of 8 knots. What is unusual, even unique about this canal, is that it is entirely at sea level for its entire length and the Bitter Lake complex is purely natural and conveniently situated to allow the convoys to pass.

The opening of the canal changed the maritime trade map of the world, as it sliced 4,300 miles (6,900 km) off the journey between Europe and India and the rest of the Far East, but in 1880 it was only the British who were using it. In that year Thomas Brassey was a Civil Lord of the Admiralty and the Hon. Member for Hastings, and on the 4 March there was a debate in Parliament headed 'Lighthouses.' During that debate he said:

The value of the trade passing between Great Britain and India had been computed at no less than £98,000,000, and nothing which affected so vast a commerce could be set aside as unimportant.

Since the opening of the Suez Canal, our trade with the East had been largely diverted to that route. The tonnage which passed through the canal in 1877 was 2,050,000, but it had increased in 1878 to 3,250,000. England led the way with 1,117 ships; France followed with only 87 ships. Italy came next with 44, and Germany last, with 27 ships. Brassey thought it unnecessary to say more in order to show how deeply interested we were in everything which could add to the safety of navigation on this main route from Europe to the East. Of the various aids to the navigator which science had afforded, lighthouses were the most important, not only as a means of saving life and property, but as a means of shortening the passage. With the growth of commerce, the number of lighthouses on our own shores had been rapidly increased. Britain had now one light for every 10½ miles of coast. The illumination of the French coasts was equally good. While the coasts of the great maritime powers were now efficiently lighted, lighthouses had been seriously neglected in the hands of Governments with exhausted Treasuries; the coasts of barbarous or half-civilized countries, in the absence of concerted action on the part of the maritime powers, must remain in total darkness.

Brassey then described from his own experience, as the owner of a large ocean-going 'yacht', the route to the east, and he highlighted those places that he considered to be seriously lacking a lighthouse. It also became clear that he had been vigorously lobbied by the Peninsula and Orient Line and several of its captains, as they had lost ships during the previous decade whilst seeking new routes to take advantage of the new canal and save as much time as possible. Short cuts lead to uncharted hazards, and for a liner it was an

unfortunate loss of life, but to a merchant, the loss of valuable goods and profit was a major disaster. These are not my words, but paraphrased from Brassey's continued speech:

Passing onwards on the voyage to the East, the navigator was assisted by an adequate number of lights until he emerged from the Gulf of Suez into the Red Sea. At a distance of 95 miles north of the light on the Dædalus shoal, which was the southernmost light at present shown in this part of the Red Sea, the track of steamers ran close to two rocks called "The Brothers," only 20 feet above water. They were invisible at night, and the current in that part of the Red Sea was strong and uncertain. A few years ago the Dutch steamer Prinz Hendrik, carrying troops to Batavia, was totally wrecked on these rocks. A light of the second or third order, visible at a distance of, say, 10 miles, was very necessary at this point. Proceeding down the Red Sea, for a distance of 720 miles, no lights were absolutely required, until within 100 miles of the Island of Perim. At its southern end the shores of the Red Sea were fringed with reefs, which ran out seawards for some distance on each side of the channel, and here the experienced commanders in the Peninsular and Oriental Service urgently asked for two additional lights - a light with a range of 20 miles, on the islet of Aboo-Ail, off the north end of the Island of Jebel-Zuker, and a light on the bank off Mocha. The Peninsular and Oriental steamer Alma was wrecked on Jebel-Zuker, and the steamer Penguin was quite recently lost on the same spot.

The value of lighthouses as a means of saving life might be illustrated by a statement lately made to him by Captain White, a commander in the Peninsular and Oriental Service. On a recent occasion, arriving off Aboo-Ail in the evening, he was obliged to close the Arabian shore, and to navigate the vessel by the lead until he arrived off the Island of Perim, a distance of 90 miles. With a light on Aboo-Ail, he might have run boldly on and have made the passage in eight hours. Not having the assistance of the light, the time actually occupied was 18 hours. The detention in these intricate spots in the case of vessels commanded by masters not intimately acquainted with the Red Sea must necessarily be more serious.

Captain Symons, in an interesting letter on this subject, very justly said that the Red Sea was now the highway of the world for Eastern traffic. On his last homeward voyage he had passed nine large steamers in one watch of four hours. Ten years earlier, an equal number would not have been seen in a month. Considering the value of property, mostly carried in English ships, that now passed through the Red Sea, it was imperatively necessary that the coasts should be properly lighted. The mail steamers, especially, were called upon to maintain a high rate of speed, were timed to arrive to the hour, and were liable to heavy penalties if late. They certainly ought to have the benefit of any modern invention for facilitating navigation on a dangerous coast.

So, the Red Sea through the Gulf of Suez, was integral to the canal, but this was 1880 and already 20 years had passed since the building of the first lighthouses. The question relating to who should take responsibility for building the lighthouses along the trading route became mired in procrastination, and the British Government had already turned a deaf ear in spite of a vociferous maritime industry and its supporting press.

The *Illustrated London News* had published an excellent description on the 24 May 1862, which explained in detail how the first lighthouses came to be built. It began in 1859 during

discussions between England, India, China and Australia concerning, what was referred to as, 'the overland route,' before the canal was built. This euphemism alluded to the railway line from Alexandria to Suez via Cairo that had been built by Robert Stephenson between 1854 and 1858. The trade from India and the Far East was considerable and almost entirely British. Consequently, it was decided in those discussions that the Khedive of Egypt should erect two or three lighthouses to be financed by the passing ships, whilst the British Government would give the lanterns, lighting apparatus and the services of an engineer. The project was placed in the hands of the Marine Department of the Board of Trade and specifically, Mr William Parkes C.E. who had to investigate suitable sites and decide the best locations, whilst guided by the commanders of the Peninsula & Orient Line.

The first light was proposed on the western side of the Gulf of Suez and about 50 miles south of Suez. It was a low lying promontory of yellow sand named Zafarana Point and could be reached by camel or boat. Parkes furnished drawings for a stone tower with single storey accommodation for the European light keepers, which was built by the Egyptian Government. The lantern and all its equipment arrived from England towards the end of 1861 and the lamp was lit on the 1 January 1862.

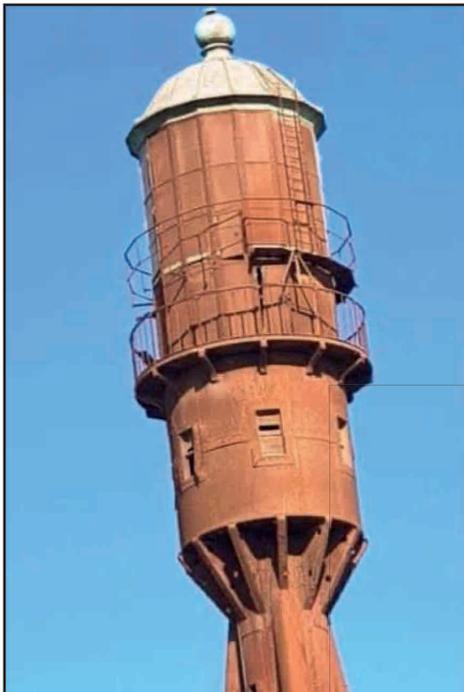
In the Strait of Jubal, where the Gulf of Suez entered the Red Sea, the strait is about 25 miles across, but low islands and submerged reefs extend from either shore leaving only about 6 miles of navigable waterway at its centre. These hazards were navigable by day, but impossible by night, so Parkes proposed a tall lighthouse on the most visible of these reefs named Ushruffee (aka Ashrafi) Reef on the western side. It was a circular reef that was just below the surface at low water. Parkes designed a tower that was 125 feet high, so that it could be seen at a great distance to enable a navigator travelling in either direction to position himself safely to the east of it before reaching the hazard.

The third light on Parkes' list was a long way further south on the Daedalus Reef, and it presented the same problem as Ushruffee. There was no useful building material or suitable location for a works yard in the immediate vicinity. Consequently Parkes designed two similar structures based on the latticework principle that could be assembled in England, dismantled and brought out to the site for re-assembly. This work was done by Messrs. G. Forrester & Co. of Liverpool and if I have given the impression that each work was consequential on the completion of the previous one, then that is not quite how it happened. Forrester's 'flat packed' towers reached Suez towards the end of 1860 after being unloaded in Alexandria at the end of November,¹¹ yet it was the 20 December 1861 before work began on the Daedalus Reef as Ushruffee was completed.

This work at Ushruffee had been planned in conjunction with the use of a small, retired P&O mail steamer called *Union*. The plan was that a small number of workmen should work from the steamer each day, ferrying the parts to the site as they were required. The captain had other ideas and eventually landed all the parts on a small island more than a mile away. This made the task infinitely more difficult and time consuming as parts had to be sorted and ferried for a second time. It was only the efforts of Scott, Parkes' assistant, that redeemed the situation, whilst the captain was 'called home.' The delay caused by the captain and the time it took to replace him, meant a delay to the work on the Daedalus Reef, but on the 20 December the small P&O packet of 340 tons¹² left Suez with its new commander, Captain

11 *Malta Times* 15 Novemebr 1860.

12 The UNION was a Packet Boat for the Mauritius to Bourbon service built in 1854 and sold in 1863.



The names of the lighthouses used here are taken from the original, contemporary sources and are considerably Anglicised. Modern versions of the names vary enormously using Anglicised translations from Arabic. Ras translates as 'Point'.

TOP LEFT: Zafarana Point - about 50 miles south of Suez on the Egyptian shore.

LEFT AND BELOW: Ras el Gharib is about 60 miles south of Zafaranah on the Egyptian shore.



Kirton, with Parkes and his lighthouse on board.

The first visit to the reef lasted nearly 9 days and with 4 English mechanics and 8 members of the ship's crew, they erected the base and lower sections of the lighthouse whilst working from the ship. The second visit of a similar duration saw 20 Arab labourers concentrating on creating the concrete sections within the base and both operations were overseen by Parkes.

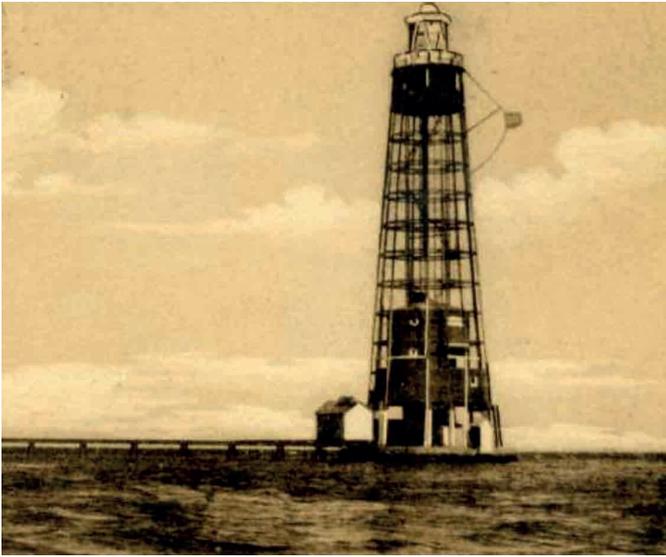
The third operation was conducted by Parkes' deputy, C.W. Scott who had finished Ushrufee and brought 10 mechanics and 10 Arab labourers with him to erect the steel structure of the lighthouse tower. This took 26 days after which the *Union* returned to Suez. For 44 days the vessel had lain off the reef and work was achieved on 37 of those days. The remainder were either Sundays or lost due to storms. Compartments were made habitable in the tower and filled with provisions and water so that six men could be left to finish the work, but after three weeks it was abandoned due to the oppressive heat, and work did not resume until the cooler autumn days. The apparent ease and efficiency with which the Daedalus light had been accomplished cast a shadow across the Ushrufee light that was soon forgotten once it had been lit.

The Daedalus light came into operation on the 1 January 1863. The lanterns and lighting equipment for all three lighthouses were built by Messrs. Wilkins & Co., with the lenses coming from the Chance Bros. It was 20 years before a light was built on The Brothers, but the problem for me remains one of language. Arabic was used on Sinai and the east coast whilst Aramaic was the language of Egypt and the west coast. Even Anglicised versions vary considerably in spellings, as we shall see in a moment.

The establishment of the first three lighthouses has been well described, but there is no description in British newspapers of the building of a lighthouse on The Brothers. However, the opening of the canal to large numbers of liners provided opportunities for those with time and money to explore new destinations. Fortunately, some of them kept journals and described their experiences and one such journal was published anonymously in the *Southern Press* (Glasgow) in October 1895. The detail it embraces, together with the names and distances, help clarify a quite confusing narrative, but with 'Jock's' help I hope it will be a little clearer.

The Gulf of Suez is approximately 195 miles in length and I have already said that 'Zaffaranah' was about 50 miles south of Suez. Jock then reaches a lighthouse of iron named Ras Garib, which is a further 60 miles. Ras Garib to 'Ashrafi' is 54 miles and a further 31 miles brings his ship to Shadwan Island on the southerly tip of which a fine lighthouse, 120 feet above the sea, has recently been erected. The Gulf of Suez now opens out into the Red Sea. Almost 100 miles south of Shadwan Island is El Ikhwa, the modern local name for The Brothers and referred to by 'Jock' as 'Achwan.' He describes two rocky islets rising from the depth of 250 fathoms and the lighthouse had been built on 'Big Brother.' Standing 102 feet tall it retains its original, hand-cranked Chance Brothers Fresnel lens, and its drive mechanism requires winding every 4 hours by the light keepers. After travelling 100 miles further south, 'Jock' continued:

We are almost into the tropics and here, standing alone in the middle of the sea, is the famous Daedalus lighthouse. It rises from the centre of a reef which is never visible above the water, except that some small black boulders rise here and there, accounting for its Arabic name of Abu Kizin - 'the father of pots.' A little masonry surrounds the foundation of the iron framework of the lighthouse and above it we see the men's quarters.



TOP LEFT AND CENTRE: Ashrafi Reef was also called Ushruffee. It is located on a coral reef 54 miles south of Ras el Gharib where the channel into the Gulf of Suez is only 6 miles wide. The metal framework structure was replaced in 1940, but the original still exists nearby. The new tower is 140 ft high and the light was a white revolving light seen at 17 miles distant.

BELOW LEFT AND RIGHT: Shadwan (aka Shaker or Shakir) Island is a further 31 miles from Ushruffee and in the entrance to the Gulf of Suez, making it 195 miles from Suez. It was built ca 1889-92 on the southern tip and was the last to be built in the period of this narrative.



On the day that he passed the *Daedalus*, 'Jock' took temperatures all around the ship at noon and he found 86°F in the State Room and 82°F in the Saloon with the Punkah going. It was 92°F on deck under the awnings and 108°F on deck in the sun. Even the water temperature was not forgotten and it was 78°F. There was no land in sight. These were the conditions in which the light keepers were expected to live. 'Jock,' as a canny journalist, gleaned from the ship's officers the system for manning the lighthouses and the result is worth recording verbatim for its 'flavour of the day.' He was told that:

The Red Sea lighthouses are maintained by the Egyptian Government. Four Europeans are attached to each one, with one always being on leave in turn. The loneliness of the locations like the Brothers or the Daedalus must be extreme, yet some of the men have held their appointments for ten years or more. They are visited once in three months by a steamer bringing supplies of fresh water and some of them have [sea water] condensing machines in case of need. All but the Daedalus have an excellent reputation for health, but there the climate is hot, damp and very trying. The rest of the lighthouses are maintained by the [employees of the] Indian Government periodically visiting from Aden. The Turkish [Ottoman] Government on the Arabian side entirely neglects its duties in this respect.

Although the information is important, a great deal is still left to the imagination. For example, how long was the leave ashore and how did the keeper get there? Once he was ashore, where did he go as a European? However, the detail extracted from these two accounts - a little more than 30 years apart - has uncovered the names and locations of the lights of the Red Sea and there were six. At first there were three, built in 1860-62. Then came the Brothers light in 1883, to which was added Ras Garib in the later 1880s followed by the island of Shadwan circa 1892/3. However, these important articles have thrown up other insights, not least the cruelty of building an iron lighthouse on the *Daedalus*, yet what choice did Parkes have? Hobson's Choice, but we are not out of the Red Sea yet. I must conclude this section with a look into the murky waters of the politics of the region.

Queen Victoria celebrated her Golden and Diamond Jubilees in 1887 and 1897, whilst her Empire climbed to the pinnacle of its world trade domination. In the midst of that period, the Victorian version of a clamour was being attempted to improve the safety of navigation from the Gulf of Aden into the Red Sea. It remained a dangerous location, but what was being done about it and who should do it?

This story begins in 1888 when the Egyptian Government announced that they had agreed with the Turkish Commissioner in Egypt to seek a 'convention' with England for the erection of 30 lighthouses at the entrance to the Red Sea off Aden. Everyone agreed that it was a dangerous area, but it was learnt by a British correspondent with his ear to the ground that the British Government was not prepared to sanction more than three lighthouses ... but 'negotiations were still proceeding.'¹³

Over the next few years it became clear that the British Government were not particularly interested in participating in a 'convention.' The whole matter had become a diplomatic dawdle through time. Questions shuttled back and forth and were deflected into the undergrowth. In the House of Commons on Thursday 24 March 1895, seven years after the original announcement, Sir James Fergusson (Manchester NE) got to his feet to ask the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sir Edward Grey, whether permission had yet

¹³ *Manchester Courier*, 15 December 1888.

been granted to build four lighthouses at the southern extremity of the Red Sea, together with another at the eastern end of the Gulf of Aden. Grey replied that the Khedive of Egypt had agreed to surrender £40,000 from the excess of light dues, and £60,000 would then be available for the construction, but detailed arrangements for this purpose had not yet concluded. Interested parties among the British public were not impressed and 'Letters to the Editor' flooded in. The general feeling was that the sum of money involved was paltry when set against the value of the goods passing through the area.

In 1897 the bombshell burst in a telegram received in London from the *Daily Mail* correspondent in Constantinople. It read;

*The Sultan has rejected Egypt's offer to construct four lighthouses on the Arabian Red Sea coast and has authorised the lighthouse administration to build them on behalf of Turkey.*¹⁴

We have already read that the Turks were generally negligent in supporting lighthouses and their obstructive influence in the area would continue for years.

As 'Jock' continued his passage to the East, he observed the west coast of Africa from the deck of his passing liner. He recalled that the Italians (for a reason that has never been explained) had instigated some form of 'protectorate' over Abyssinia and it was curious to reflect that this barren and worthless coast was claimed by Italy, Egypt and Abyssinia, if not by the British.

In 1883, it was claimed that lights were required at the following places at the southerly entrance to the Red Sea:

- (1) Oyster Reef, opposite to the Perim Light;
- (2) At Jebel Zugar on Abu Ail;
- (3) At Jebel Tier;
- (4) At Mocha;

(5) At Shadwan, a name which has already been mentioned as located at the northern end of the Red Sea, which gained a light before the end of the 80s.

Three of the other locations were highlighted in Brassey's speech recorded earlier in this paper, but what is enlightening is that 'Jock' notes on his voyage of 1895 how enmeshed the British were with the Island of Perim at a point where it was 1½ miles from Arabia and 12 miles from Africa. It had been occupied and claimed for Britain by General Murray in 1799 and ceded to the East India Company, who later abandoned it. It was revisited in 1839 by the Royal Navy when the value of its harbour was recognised, together with its strategic importance, but it was 1857 before it was reoccupied in case the French should get there first. The immediate task was to build a battery and garrison for the RGA (Royal Garrison Artillery) and a lighthouse was included to be built by the Royal Engineers. It was finished and lit in 1861.

Let there be light - The Story of Egypt's Light Keepers

Passenger lists are not available prior to 1890, although I believe they do exist and those that cover the period from 1890 are brief and untidy. Although a work occupation was required from passengers, it was not always provided. Consequently, there is only one name in that period who is recorded as a light keeper and that is HARDY. He embarked at

¹⁴ *Edinburgh Evening News*, 8 March 1897.

Southampton on a ship of the Norddeutscher Lloyd Line named *Yorck*, on the 6 March 1908. The line served Marseilles and Alexandria and the ship was almost new having been built in Danzig in 1906. Following his arrival in Alexandria, it must be assumed that he could have been deployed to any one of the lighthouses in the entire system, as no information has come to light that would suggest otherwise. It is, however, puzzling that his name stands alone among the pre-war Passenger Lists.

The 1921 census that initiated this investigation required the entry of not only an employer, but also a place of work, but the unmarried men on my chart were visiting households and not required to fill in the form. Indeed, they may even have left the house before the form was completed. Consequently the words 'Egyptian Government' usually form the description for an employer, and 'Egypt' is the place of employment. Neither is helpful to this narrative.

Nevertheless, it led to a larger number of names hidden within the Passenger Lists of outward going liners, which increased that number from 8 to 19. This section will attempt to portray some of these men in terms of who they were and how they came to volunteer for a mundane task in a very unusual environment. They could easily have sought to join Trinity House, but they did not choose that path. This casts into doubt their commitment to being a lighthouse keeper, as it would seem that many of them only completed one tour of duty (contract?) occupying a little over a year. Even George Hawker, our serial wanderer, seems only to have worked for six years, a short time in lighthouse terms, but this must not be taken as fact.

I have already attempted to cast light on their place of work, and two of the five men who wrote 'Ports and Lights, Alexandria' actually put it as their place of work. Thus details are scant but nothing like this has ever been attempted before.

There is one further observation. The table suggests that there were never more than 4 to 6 British keepers in Egypt at any one time, but the evidence is flawed. I cannot be certain how many Passenger Lists there were, and I have no access to information concerning inward-bound passenger ships from Port Said to ports in England. It also seems to have been broken into two periods: 1915 to 1922 and 1929 to 1937. The politics of Egypt may be the reason for that break. It has been surprisingly difficult to say how many lighthouses needed their attention, but I think the foregoing section now gives a much more accurate picture. So, to begin at the beginning, I must ignore Mr. Hardy, who made the passage in 1908, as it is not possible to uncover any more information about him. I will begin with the four keepers who made the dangerous passage in 1915.

War inevitably comes with a prelude. There are always events that lead to it and WW1 overlaps with the last years of the first decade of the century as the world slipped slowly towards Armageddon. English students of history are told little (if anything) about the Italo-Turkish war of 1911-12,¹⁵ prompted by Italy in their attempted land-grab on the African mainland. They had previously made incursions into Abyssinia that were repelled by the British, but the Italians were intent on annexing Libya on the pretext that he who controls Tripoli, controls Sudan. It was a complex political situation, but it had its effect on the lighthouses. The Turks extinguished all the lights in the Red Sea, and these conditions existed when the newly crowned Emperor of India, King George V, needed to travel through the region to reach his Empire. After a great deal of diplomatic wrangling, the Turks agreed

¹⁵ 29 September 1911 to 8 October 1912.

to light them between the 22nd and 27th September 1911 for the King's Royal Yacht *Medina*¹⁶ to proceed safely down the Red Sea. As soon as the Royal Yacht had passed, the Turks extinguished the lights once more and this remained a bone of contention until 1919.

As war approached, the British attempted to make the Red Sea a neutralised zone and, had that succeeded, no-one would have been able to move troops through the area, including the Suez Canal. This situation was made even more complex by Turkey's dominance over Egypt, as a one-time Ottoman state, and this became so sensitive on the declaration of war in 1914 that Britain declared Egypt a 'British protectorate.'

So what of the light keepers? Well, the four that were found on Passenger Lists for 1915, were on their way to Egypt in circumstances I find astonishing.

When I researched my Grandfather Knott's war in the Mediterranean from 1917-19, it was very clear in 1915 that the war at sea was struggling to contain the Austrians in the Adriatic and the Turks in the Black Sea. Although in that year the Germans had only 37 U-Boats, they could transit the Strait of Gibraltar at will, supplementing those of their allies, the Austrians, who had 28 submarines and were dangerously close to Alexandria, Yet commercial vessels of all kinds were left to their own devices as the Royal Navy were so short of destroyers that a convoy system was not implemented until June 1917. So, these four light keepers were making the passage at great risk to themselves and - other than their names - I know nothing about them.

Francis FISHER was the first to leave Tilbury on the P&O liner *Orontes* on the 5 June 1915 and he was followed 6 days later by Henry SEYMOUR on the *Persia* belonging to the same line. On the 17 September 1915 the P&O liner *Mongolia* left Tilbury with W.J. GANT embarked for the passage to Port Said and three weeks later the *City of London* belonging to the City Line left Liverpool with J.A. McINTYRE on board. All the men were aged from 32 to 40, but beyond that I know nothing about them as there is nothing further that would help to identify them.

These men were lucky. The *Persia* was sunk by the German U38 at lunch time on the 30 December 1915 whilst the passengers were having lunch off Crete. She sank within 10 minutes and of the 519 on board, 343 were lost. It wasn't quite so bad for the *Mongolia* which hit a mine and sank 50 miles south east of Bombay on the 23 June 1917. She sank within 13 minutes, but 450 lives were saved and only 23 were lost, all of them being crew members.

All four keepers must have returned home safely, but their departures may have been delayed until the war was over.

When the War was Over: 1919 to 1922

Seven light keepers are listed embarking for Port Said between March 1919 and March 1922, and three of these were in 1919. First was James CUTTING. As Europe reeled from the attrition on Flanders Fields, James was climbing the gangway of P&O's *Kidonan Castle*, moored at Tilbury and due to depart on the 19 March 1919, barely four months following the Armistice. He was also the first man to be found within the archive of Naval Ratings' records and therefore the first to link the top of the lighthouse service to the bottom. He was among the first to be discovered in the 1921 Census which initiated this significant investigation, so who was James Cutting and where did he serve?

16 The *Medina* was a P&O liner converted to a Royal Yacht for the passage to India and return.

The census told me that he was unmarried and had been born in Portsmouth in or about September 1876. This was confirmed in the GRO Indexes as 1876/4Q Portsea District. In checking my hunch that he had been in the Navy, I found that he had joined in 1892¹⁷ with a date of birth 24 September 1876, so he was 16 years old. I then tried the 1891 Census and found him in the Greenwich Naval Hospital School for Boys aged 14,¹⁸ but what of his family? It had to be 1881 next. James was the fourth child, but first son of James and Emily Cutting, and his father was a Colour Sergeant in the Royal Marine Artillery. As the eldest daughter was 12 years old, it could be seen that the family had lived in Portsmouth for all that time, but had they always lived where they were in 1881 - the RMA Barracks at Eastney?¹⁹

Knowing that James was in the Navy, I was surprised to see him on a census return for 1901.²⁰ He was an Able Seaman on HMS *Pioneer*, a third-class protected cruiser of the *Pelorous* Class. She was a year old and she was at Malta in the Mediterranean Fleet where she would stay until 1904. This was James's introduction to Egypt and a place to which he clearly wanted to return. 1914 was 22 years from the date of James joining the Navy and 20 years from his 18th birthday, but I am certain that he would not have been released until hostilities had ended. He would then have to find a job, and in 1918 he was 42 years old and still single. How he found that job as a light keeper has been at the heart of this dissertation, yet no answer has been found beyond the possibility that it was being advertised informally within the Royal Navy's own network. I am sceptical about a formalised system within the RN as there would have been tens of thousands of men being demobbed within a relatively short time. He is more likely to have found it for himself, but how did he do that?

Whatever he did was very successful as he was on his way to Alexandria by March 1919, and he had returned on leave from his first contract when the census for 1921 caught him visiting his parents.

Unfortunately the remaining two keepers that joined James Cutting during 1919 cannot be identified beyond their names which are too common, and the Passenger Lists do not include addresses until late 1920. What can be said is that J.H. HARVEY called himself a 'Chief Light keeper' as he travelled First Class on the Blue Funnel Line ship *Priam* from Liverpool on the 20 October 1919.

On the 21 May 1920 the City Line ship *City of Baroda* left Liverpool, carrying the only man to reveal the lighthouse on which he worked. Unusually, he did not make the passage to Port Said alone. I will return to his companion in a moment, but for James RISEBOROUGH, a man with an unusual name, he was also captured in the 1921 Census, so this is his story.

He was born on the 23 April 1878 in Sunderland, County Durham.²¹ The 1881 Census finds his family at 12 Moorgate Street in the parish of St. John, Sunderland. His father was a plumber and gas fitter born locally in 1850. His mother was Mary Anne and she had a family of 5 children (3m + 2f) aged from 8 years to 1 year old and their house was a house shared with one other family.²²

In 1891 the family was at the same address and it was still shared. It seems that the family had remained at 5 children, but the two girls had left home leaving the three boys. The

17 ADM188/270 No. 166107.

18 1891 Census RG12/515 Folio 74 Page 20.

19 1881 Census RG11/1162 Folio 143 Page 16.

20 1901 Census RG13/5330 Folio 51 Page 4.

21 GRO Index FREEBMD and 1939 Register Findmypast.

22 1881 Census RG11 Piece 5001 Folio 10 Page 13.

youngest was still at school, but the eldest was a labourer in the shipyard and James was a confectioner's errand boy.²³

Ten years later in 1901, only James (senior) and Mary Ann are left in St. John's Sunderland, but they have moved to 120 High Street. James (junior) has disappeared from the record and in these circumstances it usually means that he has joined either the Army or the Navy. This proved to be correct as The National Archive at Kew maintains the Service Records for all Naval Ratings from 1853. James RISEBOROUGH of Sunderland, born on the 23 April 1878 joined the service in 1894²⁴ aged 16 and 12 years from the age of 18 would bring him to 1908, the year in which he married Emma DIMMOCK in Sunderland in the period April to June.

Emma Dimmock's family situation in 1901 looked decidedly odd. She was living at 29 Tunstall Street in the parish of St. Paul's Ryhope, south of Sunderland, where her father, John, was a coal miner. As the term 'hewer' is used, it suggests that he was an underground worker, and his 18 year-old son was an underground engine driver. Emma and her youngest sister were 23 years apart, and Emma was only 16 years younger than her mother, Eliza, but Eliza was only a year younger than her husband and they had both been born in Pinxton Derbyshire, near where Emma had been born at Newton. Emma had a brother and sister (18 and 14) who had been born in Yorkshire, but the youngest two had been born in Ryhope from 1891. However, their births were 10 years apart. Mary was 10, but Edith was only 4 months old.²⁵

Against this background the census for 1911 revealed a single name on a single sheet for Acomb in Yorkshire and that name was Emma RISEBOROUGH. She was 33 (1878) and had been married for 3 years (1908), but had no children. Neither did she have a job as she said she had 'private means.' She said that she had been born in Blackwell, a neighbouring village to Newton (both now close to Tibshelf Services between Junctions 28 & 29 of the M1). There can be little doubt this is the correct person and she has been found living within York's city boundaries close to the B1224 in a 5-room house at 24 Milner Street, a very plain 2-up/2-down, brick-built house whose front door opens onto the street, as it did 120 years ago. This is important to the emerging story, in spite of her 'missing' husband.

Without sending for his service record, it is difficult to be certain that James continued in the Royal Navy on a second engagement, and, had he done so, he would not have been released until hostilities had ended. When we find him at home, on leave in 1921, he has moved to 5 Balmoral Terrace in York, and it is here that he reveals that his place of work was the Ras El Gharib lighthouse on the Red Sea. I will come back to that later, after a few words about his travelling companion.

W. MILLS said that he was 40. The date of the census unusually was the 19 June 1921 and one of the 8 names found was Walter Marshall MILLS. He was a retired light keeper from Egypt employed by the Ports & Lights Administration, Alexandria. This detail suggests that he has only recently retired, but was he Riseborough's companion on board the *City of Baroda* in 1920? He told the Purser he was 40 years old, but the census says that he was 57. His wife Jessie was only 45 and that is often a reason for a man to reduce his age for the sake of appearances, but he had nothing to gain by deceiving the Purser. If it was the same man (and I think that he was) he was born in Portsmouth in 1864, confirmed in the GRO Index

23 1891 Census RG12 Piece 4144 Folio 94 Page12.

24 ADM188/299 No.180352.

25 1901 Census RG13 Piece 4717 Folio 110 Page 25.

as 1863/4Q Portsea District. He married Jessie WESTON in Chester in 1901/4Q. It was here that their daughter Nellie had been born and it was here that Walter had chosen to retire - 12 Clare Avenue, Hoole on the Wirral. This was their address in the 1911 Census and although two of Walter's unmarried sisters were living in the 5-room house, Walter wasn't home. Was he in Egypt? Who knows.

In June 1921 Walter Mills was at home, a little more than 12 months since his departure with James Riseborough. On the 5 August 1921 James was on board the appropriately named ship *Yorkshire* owned by the Bibby Line and about to depart Liverpool for Marseilles and Port Said. This information conveniently suggests that his leave period embraced 2 months until further evidence to the contrary is found. As always, another anomaly creeps into the narrative as James did not say that he was a light keeper, hence he appears only once in my table. On this occasion he declared 'Ports & Lights of Egypt' and that is not an occupation. How disappointing after his exactitude in the census. However, addresses were not mandatory in the Passenger Lists and 5 Balmoral Terrace ensures that I have the right man.

A second man who did say that he was a light keeper was embarked on the *Dongola*, a ship belonging to P&O and due to sail from Tilbury on the 29 July 1921 - one week before Riseborough. He was Frederick LUCAS aged 41, but what can I say about Fred Lucas? Fortunately, he was one of the men captured by the census a few weeks earlier and we are seeing a man from Portsmouth - possibly a 'navy man.'

There are records of 35 men who joined the navy in the name of Frederick Lucas and none of them quite fit our man. However, I knew from the census that he had been born around October 1880 and this was confirmed in the GRO Index for Portsea District. The 1881 Census was the next place to look and in 43 Dumbarton Street, Portsea, there was a 6-month old Frederick with his mother Frances (27); his absent father was a Naval Officer.²⁶ More than that I cannot say, as the very common surname gives too many hits in every subsequent census, but in 1921 he was on his way to Port Said to stand watch in an Egyptian lighthouse.

In 1921, home for Frederick Stanton Lucas was 70 Station Road Swaythling on the outskirts of Southampton. His large family of four can be used to suggest his whereabouts after he married Annie Laurie FOORD in 1901/3Q in the Canterbury District, which was Annie's home town, but that marriage had a certificate and I knew that the Marriage Registers for Kent were available on-line. They married in the parish church of St. Gregory on the 18th August and Frederick Stanton Lucas was a corporal in the 6th Regiment Dragoon Guards. He was stationed in the local barracks and he had met his fiancée in the town. Annie's family lived in Northgate and her father was a stone turner, but Fred's father, whose name was revealed as Thomas James Lucas, was simply a 'sailor.' The revelation of an army background was unexpected, especially as a regiment was named on the register. Regimental histories abound, but it does not always mean that an individual was with his regiment. This was the case with Frederick. He had joined in 1899 when the Dragoon Guards were in South Africa fighting the Boers. He could not join them until he had been trained and that meant Aldershot first, before joining the Depot Company in their Barracks at Sturry Road, Canterbury. At the 1901 Census the complement was 89 men led by Squadron Sergeant Major Harold Grainger,²⁷ but even then Fred Lucas was not present.

Astonishingly Fred's Attestation Papers are available to see and these show his career as

²⁶ 1881 Census RG11/1143 Folio 112 Page 25.

²⁷ 1901 Census RG13/794 Folio 117 Page 1-4.

the Army saw it, but not necessarily where he was at any one time. He joined at Portsmouth on the 24 January 1899. He was born in Landport Hampshire 18 years and 3 months previously (the Army did not record date of birth) and he was a 'carter.' He asked to enlist on the Corps of Dragoons of the Line. He was 5 ft 8 in tall, weighed 134 lb, had brown eyes and hair and a fresh complexion. It was the Recruiting Officer, who signed him up for the 6th Dragoon Guards. Fascinating as it is, it is not my intention to record his service career beyond those facets that are relevant to this story and the first one of these was his service in India between 15 August 1902 and 14 March 1904. His outward journey on one of the ubiquitous Indian Troopships would have introduced him to the lighthouses between Port Said and Perim Island, but at the time he probably thought nothing of it. When he left India, he did not make a return trip, but went to South Africa for 5 months before returning home. His papers show that he was promoted very quickly reaching Sergeant before 1904 and he was cleared to serve for 8 years from the 1 April 1904, but in reserve. His papers also show that he was 'Discharged' on the 16 June 1913 after he was convicted in a civil court of 'carnally knowing an imbecile woman.' A local newspaper²⁸ reported his appearance before the Kent Assize on Friday 27 June accused of the rape of his sister-in-law Maggie Foorde. Inspector Smith said in his evidence, that Lucas was a Sergeant in the Dragoon Guards and he had known him for a number of years. He added that he had always worked (as a labourer) for the Corporation and had never been without employment. Lucas had pleaded not guilty saying that his victim was not 13 and could be trusted to look after the shop, but the judge thought otherwise and sentenced him to 18 months hard labour, which would not end until Christmas 1914. His Regiment was thrown into the thick of battle from the outset, but the Army wouldn't have him back, so what did he do? Who knows? What does any labourer do? His youngest two children were born in Canterbury in 1913 and 1916, but in 1921 he remembered the lighthouses he saw on his way to India.

It is now March 1922 and the youngest keeper on the chart has arrived at Tilbury to embark on the *Morea* of the P&O Line. The passenger list is professionally typed and the address he gives is simply 69 Bramcote Street SE. It is an address that is not recognised today, although Bramcote Grove is in SE16. He is 31 years old, born in 1890 but where? As 1922 is barely nine months following the census, it made sense to search for him there. I found Albert William NASH at 46 Gurney Street SE²⁹ and that was another street that no longer exists. It was in Newington - more specifically Walworth - and the local history society had a picture of it. He was 30 years and 10 months old and had been born in Farnham. That was confirmed in the GRO Index as 1890/3Q Farnham. He was married to Nellie Dorothy, two years his junior, but they had no children. Their marriage was in Brighton in 1912/2Q and the bride was Nellie D WHITING. However at the census Albert was a bricklayer, but had he joined the Royal Navy? The answer was yes, but it was 1917? So, was this the right man? Yes - Albert William NASH born Farnham 18 August 1890.³⁰ He must have been one of those men referred to as 'Hostilities Only' or HOs as the navy liked to call them, but in 1921 he was a 'brickie.' It is an untidy potted history, especially as I can add that in 1911, before her wedding, Nellie was a servant in the household of a London barrister, but why marry in Brighton? Barrister Harry Longhurst and his wife Helen were both born in Brighton. Perhaps they had another house there and Nellie went with them.

28 Kentish Express 28 June 1913.

29 1921 Census RG15/01836 Schedule 81.

30 ADM188/784 No. 68952.

Egyptian Independence - Are You Sure?

Four years had barely passed since the First World War had ceased, yet the diplomats had not stopped talking. Everyone wanted to gain some advantage from the ‘new world’ order and the Egyptians were no exception. While the diplomats talked, I have unwrapped the lives of six men who sailed from England with aspirations to be a light keeper in Egypt. I have also gained the impression that they could be deployed to any of the country’s lighthouses whether in Alexandria, Port Said or anywhere else along the Mediterranean coast³¹, but after 1922 the political landscape changed. Emigrants were still leaving Britain’s shores in droves between 1922 and 1928 yet there was not a single light keeper identified among them. Why was that?

It has already been said that in 1918 seven prominent Egyptian ‘professional men’ had formed a delegation whose sole purpose was to seek the independence of Egypt. It morphed into a political party known as the WAFD, but Egyptian politics was volatile and this is how Wikipedia describes the political scene;

The continued control of Egyptian affairs by the United Kingdom, as well as British repression of Egyptians who pushed for independence, sparked the Egyptian Revolution of 1919. Subsequently, the United Kingdom government entered into negotiations intended to abate Egyptian grievances whilst maintaining its own military presence and political influence in the country. When these negotiations failed, the United Kingdom acted unilaterally to terminate the protectorate and recognise Egypt as an independent state.

In the unilateral declaration, the United Kingdom granted to itself “reserved” powers in four areas central to the governance of Egypt: foreign relations, communications, the military, and Sudan, which was legally a condominium³² of both Egypt and the United Kingdom. These reserved powers, to which the Egyptian government did not consent, meant that nationalist grievances against the United Kingdom continued for years to come.

This agreement became known as the Anglo-Egyptian Accord 1922, but as far as this narrative is concerned it is completely in the doldrums. Nothing happened until 1929 when Egypt opened talks about protecting the waters of the River Nile, but the British were seen as constantly meddling in Egyptian affairs. The British dominated the discussions on this subject on the pretext that they represented the interests of those countries from whence the Nile rose. Diplomatic patience was becoming strained and eventually the British Government was persuaded to re-open the 1922 Accord in the hope of a more attractive conclusion. The Egyptians were losing patience and gaining confidence in their nationalist aspirations, whilst the WAFD were thought to be ‘hand in glove’ with the British. Meanwhile the first light keepers of the new era were on their way.

And Then There Were Two - 1929

It began quietly enough. It was the same old embarkation routine as two men arrived in Southampton to join the *Jervis Bay* belonging to the Aberdeen Line. They were due to sail on the 1 May 1929 and Frederick BURKITT and George HAWKER would be travelling together and disembarking at Port Said to discover what lighthouse had been allocated to them. If it was their first visit, then they may not have known one lighthouse from another

³¹ Lights on the Mediterranean coast may have been manned by men employed by the French Lighthouse Service.

³² Sovereign powers are shared jointly and not nationally.

and probably it didn't matter, but at the end of their voyage they may have enjoyed serving together. Both men would become my first multiple visitors, George Hawker, especially, I would describe as my 'serial wanderer' as he went back almost every year until 1936.

They are also particularly useful in highlighting the length of each tour of duty, which is more easily seen in the table at the beginning of this narrative. Unwrapping their lives and circumstances will throw a little more light on the nature of these men, and maybe help to understand why they did it. I will start with Frederick Burkitt, simply because he gave an address in Devonport - 19 Chapel Street was familiar territory to me.

One part of this investigation has attempted to demonstrate that the Ports & Lights Authority in Alexandria was influenced by senior Royal Naval Officers who preferred to recruit men who had been ratings in the service. Evidence for it has been patchy and not entirely conclusive as the continuity was broken by WW1 and whatever happened between 1922 and 1928. In addition, I have not been able to adequately identify the recruitment process. As a consequence it might help to play the role of the recruiting officer and write down the knowledge and experience I sought that would fit a man applying to be a lighthouse keeper.

The list of names that I had assembled in my table showed that none of the names were linked to traditional light-keeping families in the Trinity House service, so there had to be another common factor. Anyone advertising for a light keeper would be looking for someone who was used to a routine of cleaning, polishing and painting - someone able to achieve simple maintenance tasks, like checking and replenishing fuel and water tanks, and changing small components. A knowledge of ropes, knots, pulleys and winches would be useful as would a grasp of semaphore, Morse Code and even wireless transmitters. He would need to be familiar with the practise of keeping watches and all of these attributes could be found within the experience of a seaman in the Royal Navy. Basic qualities of leadership were also embedded within every rank. These were the men whose skills were eagerly sought. A senior naval officer would know exactly what he was getting, and they were almost guaranteed to be loyal to his position.

In the census for 1921, 19 Chapel Street was home to a family named LILLIS. Ada Lillis was a 48 year-old widow taking in lodgers. She was running a Boarding House, but she had only two lodgers, both working in the adjacent dockyard. She was surrounded by her family. Her widowed mother and three daughters were in the house, together with her son and his wife and two children. Ernest Lillis was a Chief Petty Officer in the RN Barracks at Keyham. He was 39 and had joined the Royal Navy in 1899 aged 18³³, so he must have been coming to the end of the 22 years service normally allowed (two consecutive periods of 12 + 10 years from the age of 18). This was a significant discovery, but the 8-year gap between 1921 and 1929 is also significant as a lot can change in that time. However, the link with the Royal Navy had to be explored.

Frederick John Burkitt joined the Royal Navy in 1902 and he was a boy in a hurry. His birth had been registered in Stockport, Cheshire in 1888/2Q, but when he presented himself at his local Recruiting Office he was under age. He had to be 15 years old, so his date of birth was pushed back to the 23 May 1887 and he was accepted as a Boy Seaman 2nd Class³⁴ from Stockport in Cheshire. Circumstances of this nature often mean some form of family tragedy

33 Ernest William Stephen LILLIS ADM188/356 No. 204657 with a DoB of 1 October 1881 at Devonport.

34 ADM188/395 No.224137.

as the Royal Navy became a refuge in which to seek stability and security and it certainly seems that Frederick Burkitt was in need of some stability. Neither Frederick nor his family have been found in 1901, but in 1891, evidence of the family tragedy shouted from the page.³⁵

At 22 Royal George Street, not far from Stockport's main railway station, Alice Burkitt was 25 years old and a widow with a 2-year-old son, Frederick. Alice Jordain RICHARDSON had married Edwin James Burkitt early in 1888 when she was already pregnant. Having discovered the name of her husband, I went in search of a tragedy, expecting an accident to be reported in a local newspaper. I found that tragedy, but it was no accident. Edwin Burkitt left home unusually early on Saturday morning 13 September 1890 and after opening his shop he went down to the cellar and hanged himself. An unnamed witness told the Coroner at the Inquest on the following Tuesday, that he had been depressed by business difficulties for sometime.³⁶

The glimpse of the family just 7 months later, with a single lodger in the house, could not last for long for a 25 year-old woman, who had been born in London's Covent Garden.³⁷ It was inevitable that she would marry again, but it was a surprise to see that it took place in Stockport at the end of 1896/4Q. The name of her new husband is ambiguous as there are two possibilities³⁸ and the newlyweds are invisible within the next census of 1901. Suffice it to say that young Frederick was 8 years old and stepfathers are known to be unsupportive of boys who are not their own. In 1902 it would have been expected that a parent presenting a boy for acceptance as a Boy Seaman would sign all the official papers in giving their permission for him to join the service. To change a date of birth was deceit, but it was also deliberate. There was no better place to be than the Royal Navy and the sooner the better.

As a well salted seaman, Fred Burkitt found the love of his life in Devonport in 1911 and her name was Ellen Beatrice NATION, an unusual name to be found in Plymouth, and she lived as a family of seven in two rooms at 16 Waterloo Street, East Stonehouse.³⁹ They married by banns at St. George's, East Stonehouse on New Year's Day 1912 and Ellen was carrying their first child. Edwin C Burkitt was born on the 27 July 1912⁴⁰ and named after the father that Frederick had never known. The second initial 'C' is probably for 'Charles' the second name of Ellen's father, a builder's labourer. The births of two daughters in 1914 and 1918⁴¹ proved that the family remained in East Stonehouse for the duration of the war, but redundancy came with the peace.

Queenie was their third daughter and she was born in Stockport towards the end of 1919, so Frederick had returned 'home' to look for work. In June 1921 'home' was at 125 Buxton Road, just a few hundred yards from his old 1891 house, which no longer exists. The new place, with three rooms, may have been a flat over a shop - a line of which stand at that address today. Fred's work was not a great success, as he was no more than a labourer in Stockport Borough Council's gas works at Great Portwood.⁴² Surely he could do better than that?

35 1891 Census RG12/2801 Folio 132 Page 31.

36 Manchester Courier Tuesday 16 September 1890.

37 FREEBMD 1865/2Q St. James Westminster and the 1881 Census for that district.

38 Joseph FLETCHER and John Robert WALLACE.

39 1911 Census for East Stonehouse.

40 1939 Register for 71 Gloucester Street Devonport where he was a miller's labourer in HMDockyard.

41 Ivy W.P. born Nov/Dec 1913 is not in the GRO but the 1921 Census - Doris 1918/1Q East Stonehouse.

42 1921 Census RG15 Piece 16673 Schedule 60.

As Hawker and Burkitt leaned on the rail of the *Jervis Bay* watching the mooring ropes being hauled inboard from the quayside bollards of Southampton's Ocean Terminal, the Purser was filing his Passenger List safely in its place as yet another voyage got under way. For George Hawker, Southampton was a convenient port of departure as the address that had been recorded for him was in Purbrook, just north of Portsmouth on the road to Waterlooville. On the other hand, Fred Burkitt had come up from Plymouth on the Southern Railway and he had stayed overnight just to be sure that he could embark at the right time. The addresses that each man had given were not described as their 'home address,' but their 'last address in the United Kingdom.' If Burkitt had stayed overnight, technically it should have been the address of his hotel, but it wasn't.

However, the fact that Burkitt's address was in Plymouth between 1929 and 1934 must mean that he had abandoned Stockport and labouring in a gas works in favour of a regular job with an unusual, but essential purpose. He would no longer be a filthy, fleck of fly ash, but a respected participant in an important task. He would once again don a smart uniform and he would return to the Mediterranean.

Indeed the passenger lists suggest that he returned to the Mediterranean not once but three times, and on each occasion the same address in Devonport was given to the Purser. He even boarded his ship in Plymouth Sound in 1932 and 1934, taken out to the ships on the fondly remembered tenders of the Great Western Railway from Millbay Docks.

George Hawker's voyage with Fred Burkitt was George's first recorded voyage, but he went on to experience four more voyages and the interval between them is quite regular, approximating to 14 months. He went out to Port Said in 1933, but Fred Burkitt didn't. His eldest child, Edwin, married in the spring and this family occasion may have kept him at home. Edwin married Christine Elfreda Mary LUSCOMBE at St. George's, East Stonehouse on the 3 June 1933 and confirmed that his second name was indeed Charles. So, it was 1934 before Frederick Burkitt secured another contract for a tour of duty on an Egyptian lighthouse.

More evidence that the Burkitt family presence in Plymouth was now permanent appeared in 1937 when all three daughters married in quick succession in order of precedence and St. George's, East Stonehouse was the chosen parish church allowing them all to be married by Banns. Ivy Winifred Phyllis married William John HARVEY on the 11 December 1937. She was followed down the same aisle by Doris, who married Kenneth BANE on the 20 August 1938. Queenie completed the year by marrying David Richard CLEMENS on the 21 December 1938.

It was three happy, family occasions within twelve months, All of their children had found their match and Plymouth was their home, yet they were unaware of what the future had in store for them. Before the end of September 1939, their mother, Ellen, was dead. She was only 49. Her husband had been left alone in the house at 76 George Street, a house that was not only the last house in the street, but one which was just a short walk from Chapel Street, where it had all begun. Ironically, he was nothing more than a labourer.⁴³

I make no apology for following the perceived banality of family events for 10 years, as it seemed inappropriate to break the thread, but the point of doing so was to demonstrate the continuity of well paid employment in Egypt at a time when employment prospects for a 'labourer' at home were poor. And when it was not available, Fred Burkitt would have had to

43 Frederick J BURKITT died in Plymouth in 1957/4Q aged 70.

queue outside the labour exchange with cap in hand.

The Hawker Family were completely different and I found them in Lambeth where George was born to John and Henrietta on the 24 October 1883. They were still in Lambeth in 1891, living at 12 Eaton Street, a street that seems to have been swept aside along with its neighbours King Street and Wootton Terrace. John Hawker was a warehouse man, and I can imagine young George watching him come home exhausted each evening, thinking that there has to be more to life than that. The solution, as it was in so many young lives, was to join the Royal Navy, and he did that as soon as he had passed his 15th birthday.⁴⁴

In April 1901, George's name was the penultimate name on the crew list of the cruiser *Australia* suggesting that he had only just joined the ship. He was listed as 17 and an Ordinary Seaman, which could not be correct until he was 18. The cruiser was the Coastguard ship allocated to Southampton Water from 1893 to 1903 covering the coastline from Southampton to Harwich. On census night she was moored in Portsmouth Harbour, probably preparing for the summer cruises and fixing the never-ending list of defects.

Technically, he had signed on for 12 years service from the age of 18 and that propels us forward to 1913 after which, if his record was good, he would have been invited to serve a further 10 years. History dictates that this would have embraced WW1 and taken us to 1923, but is that what he did? In the middle of the war he was married and his bride was Florence A.H. GOULD. They married on the 18 July 1916 by Licence in the Devonshire Square Chapel, Stoke Newington Road, Hackney and George was a Signaller RN. One of the witnesses to his marriage was Nahum TEMPLE, a very unusual name that is easily traced.⁴⁵ In 1911, he was a Stoker on the cruiser *Argyll* in the 5th Cruiser Squadron in Gibraltar, from where she was detached to escort the RY *Medina* conveying George V to India, a coincidence that has already featured in this story, but George Hawker was not among the crew of the *Argyll*. Ten years later, in 1921, George is a Yeoman of Signals in Portsmouth and living in Bosham, and in 1921 he had two more years to serve. In 1923 he would need to look for another job. Whatever he chose, it must have been unsatisfactory, and in 1929 Egypt crossed his mind.

The Politics of Empires 1930 to 1937

If my reader has been drawn to this topic because of an interest in lighthouses, then he/she may be wondering why I have dragged them through the banality of life events in family histories. These seemingly ordinary family stories, like many of the others from my table, are interwoven with the geo-politics of their day which inevitably impinged upon their lives. As a result, it is often possible to detect the consequences of political decisions within a set of seemingly mundane family circumstances.

So, talks about independence drifted into the 1930s as the British agreed to re-negotiate the 1922 Agreement on the pretext of Italian expansion into Ethiopia. This came to a head with the war on Egypt's doorstep in 1935. These new negotiations came to a conclusion on the 26 August 1936, when yet another Treaty was signed in London. This Treaty, however, was still biased towards the British and did not resolve the issue of Sudan, which was supposedly governed jointly, but in reality rested firmly within British hands. This new Treaty agreed to the removal of all British forces from Egyptian cities, with a limit of

⁴⁴ ADM 188/358 No. 205783 of 1899.

⁴⁵ Nahum George H born 1889/1Q Hackney - married in Hackney 1916/2Q to Florence FARMER.

10,000 within the Canal Zone. Unlimited numbers of troops could remain in Sudan, but the Egyptian Army was allowed to return there. British Forces could remain in Alexandria for 8 years from the date of the Treaty, but, in the event of a war, British Forces retained the right to use Egyptian ports, airports and roads. Inevitably, the Treaty was not welcomed by the 'nationalists' who wanted full independence and a consequential wave of demonstrations and violence was the result, not only against the British, but against their own kind in the form of the WAFD. It was now 1937.

It had become diplomatic practise to register new Treaties with the United Nations. This occurred on the 6 January 1937, and preceded a debate in Parliament about the implications of the Treaty. On Monday 15 March, Lt.Col. Sir Walter Dorling Smiles (Conservative, Blackburn) asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs:

What compensation, if any, will be paid to the British lighthouse keepers in the Red Sea who are to be compulsorily retired from the service this year?

Viscount Cranborne replied.

I assume that my honourable and gallant Friend is referring to the British lighthouse keepers in the service of the Egyptian Government. These lighthouse keepers are retiring normally at the expiration of their contracts. Consequently the question of compensation does not arise.

Cranborne's assumption was based on the knowledge that Smiles was a member of India's Assam Legislative Assembly during the 1920s after becoming involved in the management of a tea plantation. This reply also shines a light on the conditions of service that applied to the British light keepers, which have already been mentioned.

On the 24 March 1937, the Conservative Member for South Kensington, Sir William Davison, asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs:

... whether he is aware that considerable dissatisfaction exists among the British lighthouse keepers employed in the Egyptian ports and lights service owing to the fact that the lighthouses nearer shore are now manned mainly, if not entirely, by Egyptians and the more distant lighthouses, where conditions are more difficult and the work more arduous, are manned partly by Egyptians and partly by British, and that the latter arrangement, particularly, proves unsatisfactory in practice; and will he make representations to the Egyptian Government regarding this matter?

Mr Eden replied:.

I am asking His Majesty's Ambassador in Cairo for a report.

Davison's 24-year record as the MP for that London constituency is recorded on the internet in much detail. Every speech he made, and every question he asked, is there to be seen, and it is blatantly obvious that he had no special interest in lighthouses of any nationality or their keepers. His question must have been the result of someone expressing their concern to him, and I wonder who that might have been. There was one candidate who will be revealed in a moment, but not before we have back-tracked to 1930 and looked closer at what was happening on the ground. No less than 14 embarkations are recorded between May 1930 and June 1936. Only 7 light keepers were involved, and the first and last voyages were undertaken by the same man - or so it seemed at the time.

Whose Lighthouse Is It Anyway?

John Somerville was that light keeper. His first voyage began from Tilbury Docks on the 23 May 1930, when he embarked upon P&O's *Oronsay*, which was just 5 years-old and dedicated to the passage to Australia. It was this Passenger List that revealed another clue concerning the recruitment process. Instead of inserting a domestic address, he entered the words c/o Dean & Dawson, 6 Pearl Buildings, Portsmouth. It transpired that this was a well reputed Travel Agency whose identity had been used by the document forgers in Stalag Luft III prior to the Great Escape of 1943. The Agency must have been the source of all the documentation he needed to travel to and from Egypt, but he didn't need them again until 1935.

This is added evidence of a short-term occupation to which these nomadic men returned when there was nothing else available. As a Portsmouth man with naval service,⁴⁶ he would have had one eye on the naval dockyard, but employment was dire in the 1930s and casual labouring men were being laid off in droves as the navy reduced in size. Disarmament was still under the influence of the Washington Conference of 1919, which was renewed in 1929, but the situation became particularly bad in the period 1932-34 when the failure of discussions in Geneva caused Britain to begin re-arming. This restless period falls exactly within the period of Somerville's 'contracts,' which again suggests that they were of 1-year duration.

Tilbury had grown considerably since that first ship had entered the new basin created at Gravesend Reach opposite Northfleet in 1886. Somerville's departure in 1930 had taken him through the new passenger terminal and embarkation jetty (above), opened by Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald just a week earlier on Friday 16 May. Technically it was a landing stage which rose and fell with the tide and allowed passenger gangways to remain at a comfortable angle to the ship regardless of the state of the tide. This had been designed by the Chief Engineer of the London, Midland & Scottish Railway that brought trains to the terminal buildings.

In spite of living in Portsmouth (at 196 Arundel Street), Somerville returned to Tilbury twice more in 1935 and 1936, but for the moment it is George Hawker who is of particular interest, and he preferred Southampton for his embarkations from a Portsmouth address. Hawker left Southampton four times - in 1930, 1931, 1933 and 1934, and it is the intervals between embarkations that are of interest. The statistics provided an insight into the duration of each tour, and the gap between two successive embarkations varied by as much as 75 days. However, the average time between embarkations was 63 weeks, and, allowing for 2 weeks in transit in either direction, that gave 7 weeks leave between tours. This seems logical and reasonable, but what is not known is whether every year was a separate contract. I suspect that it was. Hawker was the only man to make as many as four trips, but that was until I found an obituary in a Scottish newspaper dated 1932.

Arnold John ELLIS had left Liverpool on the 30 January 1932. He was travelling with a fellow Scot named William HYND on the P&O liner *Balranald*. They were almost the same age and they probably enjoyed their time together, with only 123 other passengers for company. Arnold was a native of Orkney but he had lived for many years in the vicinity of Montrose where his father had been the manager of a distillery. In spite of being 39 years old, in November 1931 he married Jeannie Findlay, the daughter of the sub-postmaster in

⁴⁶ John William SOMERVILLE born Portsmouth 9 March 1879 ADM188/302 No.181559 of 1894.

Ferryden, just outside Montrose and close to the local lighthouse. Surprisingly, the obituary states that he had worked for the Egyptian Government in the Ports & Lights Service for 18 years and he had recently been the Principal Keeper at the Brothers Lighthouse. Unfortunately, he became ill and was removed to a surgical hospital before returning home in June. He did not fully recover and died on Tuesday 13 September 1932 in the Aberdeen Royal Infirmary aged 39. On the following Friday, he left 17 William Street for the last time and was laid to rest in the Rossie Island Burying Ground.⁴⁷

This poignant event was a wonderful addition to this narrative as it was the first and only time a light keeper has been linked to a lighthouse in this period of 1929-37. It is also the first and only time the subject of the story can be seen. It also reveals a continuity of service that I had not previously suspected, for these 18 years take the story back to 1914 and infer continuous service throughout the war years. This young man who was only 21 in 1914 was not swept along by the frenetic wave of patriotism that engulfed his contemporaries. Working throughout as a light keeper, he had survived that disaster only to succumb to the rigours of his task. Sadly, his illness becomes a crucial piece of information, and although the following piece is historically 27 years old, it must still have been relevant in 1932.

The Egypt Correspondent of *The Lancet* said this:

The lonely lot of a Red Sea light keeper, who are mostly Englishmen, is far from a cheerful one and leads to neurasthenia. They suffer from sleeplessness, emotional symptoms, tremors and exaggerated reflexes. Two men lately committed suicide on leaving Egypt and a third has developed delusions.

Needless to say, the *Daily Mirror* took advantage of the report under the headline - LIGHTHOUSE INSANITY.⁴⁸

It was probably no accident that on his return to duty, Arnold had found himself allocated to the Brothers Light, but what about Bill Hynd? Were they all Principal Keepers? Surely not. That would not work if all the lighthouses in the Red Sea were manned by Europeans or even Englishmen as the *Lancet* suggests. This statement takes on a new meaning and begs the question - how exactly were these lighthouses manned?

The original intention of managers was probably to gradually introduce Egyptians into the lights with 'on the job' training against that inevitable day when both the management and the operation of all the lights would become Egyptian. In 1930, this day was fast approaching. It had already reached the Red Sea, but, as the questions in Parliament later revealed, this wasn't an ordered handover to a specific timetable. British light keepers were being gradually replaced, and the Egyptians liked the easier lights. The two most difficult lights were The Brothers and the Daedalus - much farther to the south - and Arnold Ellis's obituary might be hiding some unsaid truths. We might guess that he was new to The Brothers, so, after 18 years service, had he been pushed out? James Riseborough had been on Ras el Gharib, but that was a shore station and probably no longer manned by the British. Ellis may have become ill because of the known risks to health, but it gives no clue as to his illness. His death certificate might do that, but there is no guarantee of that, for his illness may have had a significant psychological content that was less understood in the 1930s.

The considerable dissatisfaction among British light keepers did not reach the floor of

⁴⁷ *Montrose Advertiser*, Friday 16 September 1932.

⁴⁸ *Daily Mirror*, 27 February 1905.

the Houses of Parliament until 1937. To me, that is not surprising, as they were just a small group of working class men with no impact on British daily life. Issues probably took years to reach the Floor of the House, and I would be surprised if the dissatisfaction was not accelerating in 1932.

During that year I found another surprise in a man I have not yet introduced. Percy Douglas ANSTISS came to my notice as a light keeper in 1935 making the voyage to Port Said, but something made me wonder whether anyone had made that voyage without saying that he was a light keeper. Percy's name was sufficiently unusual to tempt me to make a search. Eureka! He was there. Instead of the single journey I had found previously, he made four - the first in 1932.

On the 2 June, the *Nippon Maru* left Tilbury for Japan, a Japanese ship with only 17 passengers. The passenger list gave a familiar address in Folkestone, and I knew then that I was on the right track. Percy gave his occupation as a 'Government Official' a vague catch-all with an air of importance. What is also odd is that he gave his last country of permanent residence not as 'England,' but a 'Foreign Country.' This may have been a mistake as he doesn't appear in older passenger lists as leaving England.

When he sailed for a second time on the 30 September 1933, he chose the P&O *Orford*, bound for Australia with no less than 800 passengers on board. It was the exact opposite to the *Nippon Maru*, but, like a starling in a huge flock, the hawk cannot pick you out for his lunch. On this occasion he simply stated 'Official,' which was even more vague than his last entry. Was he deliberately trying to be discreet? Was he hiding something? Was he sensitive to his employment as a light keeper? In fact I cannot even be certain he was a light keeper, but Port Said was always his destination. So what kind of a man do we have here? What was Percy's story?

Percy Anstiss adds a little more colour to my story of this small band of 'rolling stones.' When I chose 'A Breed Apart' as the title of this dissertation I felt that it was appropriate and accurate, as I have met such men in my own working life as a civilian electronics technician on Royal Navy warships. Exuding self-confidence, they always had a tale to tell that none could match, and were always looking for the next opportunity to go somewhere to their advantage, whilst shunning the promotion that would tie them down. Some people might say they had a restless spirit, and that may be true, but 'home' was wherever they laid their head that night. Percy Douglas Anstiss seems to have been such a person. His name stands out, when searching databases. It is an unusual combination of three names and the double 's' adds to its relative scarcity.

He was born to Frederick and Agnes Anstiss on the 14 September 1879,⁴⁹ probably in the same house in which the census enumerator found them in April 1881.⁵⁰ This was 15 Warbeck Road, Hammersmith, one street away from the Shepherd's Bush market on the Uxbridge Road. Frederick Anstiss was a 'commission agent,' possibly an early version of the insurance man who, when I was a kid, called at my house each week to collect pennies for a rainy day. So, they seemed a perfectly normal family of three young boys, but that is the last we hear of them until Percy Anstiss is married in the Fulham District in 1904/1Q to Doris Mary LEMASNEY.

Why the family cannot be traced in the censuses for 1891 and 1901 is a mystery, but they

49 1939 Register and confirmed in the GRO Index as 1880/1Q Fulham.

50 RG11/60 Folio 83 Page 95.

are nowhere to be found. Searching is even worse for Percy's new wife because the name is so unusual that it would be subject to transcription errors. There are only 11 entries in the GRO Index, from the first entry in 1859 in Rotherhithe until Percy's marriage in 1904. His marriage was one of only two marriages, so those 11 entries relate to only 8 people. Of course, the natural conclusion to a marriage is a birth, and a very large number of Anstiss births were registered between 1904 and 1914. Every one that I checked proved to be wrong. Percy and Doris had gone missing.

The breakthrough came from an unlikely source in the medal rolls for the First World War.⁵¹ Percy Douglas Anstiss had been awarded the standard WW1 Campaign medals - and he was listed as Lieutenant Percy Douglas Anstiss of the Egyptian Labour Corps. Can there be any doubt? I cannot be sure. There is a Percy D Anstiss embarked upon the *Orontes* for Port Said on the 5 June 1915 as a 'civil servant.' His age is almost correct, but not quite and this Passenger List did not require an address to be included. Assumptions are dangerous, but if I assume that he was the person in the medal rolls, then he was demobbed at the end of the war and consequently unemployed. Unemployment is a great leveller. What stands against this argument is that his name appears three times in the 1930s as a civil servant or government official, and his voyage in 1935, as a light keeper, falls neatly in between. I will return to this problem later.

The Egyptian Labour Corps is long forgotten, and modern opinions suggest that it was deliberately forgotten - maybe 'swept under the carpet' is a better phrase. However, as always, it began for the right reasons. It is also forgotten that the 1914 declaration of war included war against the remnants of the Ottoman Empire; Egypt remained a part of that Empire. Britain realised that conflict in Sinai to prevent the Turks from reaching the Suez Canal would require massive logistical support for its supply lines, and there was no way that anything could be built by the British in such an inhospitable environment. The Egyptian Camel Transport Corps with its 72,000 camels was one solution, but building railways and roads, and even a pipeline for fresh water, was a gargantuan task. It had to be done by those who lived there, and the British decided to tempt the local rural labouring class from their tiny villages to join them in that task. Recruitment began in 1915. In return the British Government offered the equivalent of 1/6d (7.5 p) per day, an overcoat and 'board and lodging.' By January 1916, the Corps was 3,000 strong.

There is a complete dearth of records concerning this Corps and no-one is even sure how many men were employed - estimates vary ten-fold from 55,000 to half a million. Their work, however, was indisputable, and it was most in evidence along the Suez Canal. One source of particular interest to this essay describes its organisation. In true Army fashion, a gang was composed of 50 workmen and this was the basic working unit, usually led by the head man of the village from whence the gang had been recruited. The native head of each gang was supported by a civilian Supervisor Foreman who was given a uniform and treated as a non-commissioned officer (NCO), but there is no information concerning the source of their recruitment. Twelve gangs comprised a Company, and the Company was led by a British Army subaltern - a Lieutenant or below. Percy Anstiss was a subaltern and twelve gangs amounted to six hundred men.

It is said that the officers were recruited from British Army NCOs with a prior knowledge of Arabic, or a particular interest in the area. They were trained in some depth, and their

51 The National Archive, Kew WO 372/1.

level of proficiency was rewarded with a special rate of pay. So, without going into any more detail, Percy's attraction to Egypt, and his usefulness to the Ports and Lights Administration, is very clear, but why did he appear only once in the Passenger Lists? Where was he between 1920 and 1935? Was he the same man as the one making the passage in 1933 and 1937? In 1939, he was at 19 Dryden Street, Nottingham where he said he was a 'seaman' and school caretaker. His wife did not like the name Doris, preferring to be called Marie. Enigmatic to the core!

Indeed, 1935 could be considered a pivotal year. Four British light keepers are known to have been in Egypt as the political atmosphere began to deteriorate. The suggestion that the Egyptians were moving into the 'easiest' lights eliminates any thought of a British presence in Alexandria and Port Said. These four keepers were the keepers on the Red Sea lights and a good reason for Edward Reade's visit. Those keepers were Percy Anstiss, Fred Burkitt, George Hawker and John Somerville. Two were our 'serial wanderers.' Fred Burkitt, was just approaching the end of his tour of duty, as he had left Plymouth in March 1934. Percy Anstiss may have been his relief as he left Tilbury on the 17 January 1935 as a passenger on P&O's *Barabool*. Somerville followed him on the 11 April on a sister ship *Baradine*, whilst George Hawker made his very last voyage from Tilbury a month later, on the 6 June, on board another sister ship, the *Bendigo*. These were the men who were still on duty when Edward Reade arrived for his 'Tour of Inspection.'

I thought it essential to try and discover a little more about Edward Reade, but that proved easier said than done. In my youth, people like the Reades, who spurned the permanence of a house and the familiarity of a neighbourhood and corner shops, were considered to be a little less than normal. We called them rolling stones, and only occasionally did they roll across our path. However, I was not to know that when I saw his name in the Passenger List for the *Otranto*. Beyond the address, it said no more than "E.W.H.Reade 64." The only place to start my search was at the beginning, in the Indexes of the General Registration Office in the year 1871. In spite of the added 'e', the surname is very common. Fortunately, however, his three initials set him apart and allowed me to find him. Edward William H. Reade was born in Southampton at the beginning of 1872/1Q. He did not join the Royal Navy, so it was the 1939 Register, when he was 67 years old, that revealed his birthday, 30 January 1872. Ominously, there was not another Reade birth registered in the Southampton District between 1860 and 1880. They were not a settled family. There is no record of a baptism to reveal his family circumstances, so I resorted to the censuses for 1881 and 1891 and what did I find? Nothing. The presence of a wife and daughter without names on the Passenger List did, at least, show that he had married. That was confirmed when I found them in the 1939 Register. Alice Reade was much younger than her husband, and their daughter had been born in 1926, so was this wedding the result of the Post-War Peace? No! It was registered in Southampton in the first weeks of 1903/1Q. Yet there is no sign of Edward Reade in Southampton in 1901.

Alice Ruth WRIGHT was a different matter. She was alleged to be 51 in 1935, placing her birthday in 1884. That was confirmed in 1939 when it was recorded as the 5 December 1884 and validated in the GRO Index as 1885/1Q in Kingston, Surrey. She was born into the large family of a gas fitter in East Molesey, not far from Hampton Court. In 1891, there were eight children in the house in Beauchamp Road.⁵² In 1897, Alice lost her brother, Walter, at

14 years old. He was just a year older than his sister, and in all probability they were very close and she would have felt his loss badly. In 1901, she was 16 and no longer living at home, but in the premises of a fruiterer as his shop assistant in Broad Street, Teddington.⁵³ This was not far from her family home, being three miles to the north across Bushey Park. What happened next is anyone's guess, but in less than two years she was 18 years old and marrying a man of 31 in Southampton. Surprisingly, it was 22 years before she fell pregnant with their only child, and that birth has never been registered in England or Wales. She is even officially blanked out in the 1939 Register when they were living on the Newmarket Road in Cambridge.

When, on the 31 August 1935, Reade sailed from Tilbury on the *Otranto* (another of P&O's fleet of liners covering the passenger route to Australia) we must ask what he was doing. He was 64 years old and accompanied by his wife and 9 year-old daughter, the only ones in this investigation to do that. The first assumption, based upon his age, must surely be that they were going on an exotic holiday to view the pyramids. If that had been the case I don't think he would have said that he was a 'Lighthouse Inspector.' It is possible that he was a Civil Servant within the Board of Trade, as independent employers of Lighthouse Inspectors must have been almost non-existent. He seems to be on an assignment, which may be related to the gradual withdrawal of British interests in the country's lighthouses. He may have been asked to inspect one specific lighthouse. On the other hand, Inspectors are not necessarily Engineers. Inspectors do look at condition, but they also look at process, and he may have been asking questions about the relationships between the keepers. He may have been the source of the later questions in Parliament, as his address written in the passenger list was 320 Galpin's Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey - only a bus ride away from the up-market stores of Croydon. Nevertheless it was not within the constituency of Sir William Davison, north of the Thames in South Kensington.

I am no closer to knowing how and why Edward Reade became a Lighthouse Inspector. What does seem likely is that he was on business, providing reports to the British Authorities as they wound down their nominal involvement in the lighthouses of Egypt. There can be little doubt that Reade was venturing into a growing 'hot-bed' of resentment and a remote lighthouse on the Red Sea was not conducive to a working atmosphere that was tense with temperaments that were ill-suited to one another.

When George Hawker came out in May 1934, he changed his employment status to 'Lighthouse Engineer.' In theory, that was not possible, but was there a reason for that, especially as he was followed by Edward Reade? There is no doubt in my mind that the scene was being set for the withdrawal of all British light keepers and that day was not far off.

John Somerville was 57 when he embarked upon the P&O ship *Naldera* due to sail from Tilbury on the 5 June 1936. His 12 months tour of duty would take him beyond the date of the questions in the House asked by Sir Walter Smiles, but he would be there when Percy Anstiss arrived in April 1937. Percy was in the guise of a 'Civil Servant' and these two men would be the last men known to have worked on the lights of Egypt. It reminds me of the old joke often seen displayed in cartoon form - LAST MAN OUT - TURN OFF THE LIGHT. If that had been done, P&O would have had something to shout about, but they would not be able to direct their angst at the British Government - they weren't interested!

Sir Horace Hamilton, the Permanent Secretary to the Board of Trade, was giving evidence to Parliament's Public Accounts Committee in September 1937 in which he said:

There are lights on certain rocks at the southern end of the Red Sea whose ownership is unknown. We took over these lights at the beginning of the war (WW1) and we have kept them up ever since, but I do not believe that it has ever been decided whose lights they are. We get contributions from Germany, Holland and Italy, but two other countries who use them, give nothing. The ship owners of the United Kingdom have paid 61% of the cost of their upkeep amounting to £5300.

This revelation probably relates to those lighthouses in the vicinity of Perim Island which the Turks had promised to build, but which did not involve any of the keepers featured in this narrative. It also negates the announcement made in this same newspaper in September 1931 that a 'convention' had been signed by six maritime nations to contribute £11,000 to maintain and manage the lighthouses in the Red Sea the leading signatories of which were the Board of Trade and the Ottoman Lighthouse Company. So, the ownership of the lighthouses should not have been in any doubt. Six nations had agreed to their contributions with Britain paying the lion's share at 61%. The two countries who were not paying were France (7%) and Japan (4%). Why wasn't the diplomatic screw being turned on them? Perhaps it is indicative of the lethargy of the British Government.

A Lighthouse Legacy

The point about a legacy is that it is something tangible, often something personal from a fondly remembered friend or relative. Politicians like to think they have changed the world for the better, but nothing is more useful than a lighthouse. Many lighthouses are instantly connected to their designers. Smeaton and Douglass both left legacies on the Eddystone Rocks, and the Stevenson family a plethora of lighthouses around Scotland. Too often we see the object, but have no idea of its designer. The Forth Railway Bridge is one example. Not so the bridge over the River Tamar from Devon into Cornwall, inextricably linked to Isambard Kingdom Brunel. In Egypt it is possible that people remember the name of the man behind the Suez Canal as Ferdinand deLessops. It is unlikely, however, that they will know of his link with the Panama Canal.

The people for whom there is no legacy or memorial are the builders and the keepers - the ordinary folk who give their time, their strength, and sometimes their lives, to create it and to maintain it. This is why this story is so important and why I found it necessary to give my time to compiling it. These men need a memorial. So let me end with the two most prominent lights in the Red Sea that stand as their memorial, The Brothers and the Daedalus.

William Hardcastle designed The Brothers and saw it built. It is there to this day, still attended by light keepers. The older of the two stations was the Daedalus, designed and built by William Parkes. In 1931 it was replaced by an impressive, traditional tower with modern accommodation for its keepers who are still in attendance. Its date was almost coincident with the arrivals of Anstiss and Reade. Was this light the reason for their arrival? Anstiss designated himself, an 'engineer' and Reade had come to 'inspect' its operation. Yet, there is a plate on the tower that suggests a French involvement. That plate recognises the date of its original construction as 1863. To me, that plate is the memorial to all that has gone before.